IGNITING EVANGELISM IN A CHURCH THROUGH PROXIMAL RELATIONSHIPS:

FROM MISSIONAL TO EVANGELISTIC

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To my faithful wife, Amanda.

Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis-project describes how evangelism can be ignited in an otherwise missional church by developing intentional relationships between a congregation and targeted parts of a community. It demonstrates the absence of evangelism by American Christians alongside the decline of relationships in the culture and church. The contents develop a biblical theology of evangelism and include a review of popular missional church and evangelism literature. The thesis-project is applied in the Calvin Presbyterian Church, an Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ellwood City, PA. It includes an Anonymous Questionnaire developed to measure increase in the congregation's relationships and evangelism.

CHAPTER ONE

RELATIONSHIP AS A KEY TO EVANGELISM

The Evangelism Problem

For 16 years I have pursued obedience to the Great Commission. I was only 17 when I received a distinct and personal call at a youth retreat to commit my life and career to reaching unchurched and unsaved peoples. At the time I hardly knew what it meant, but I was committed to following the call. I sought mentors, met with youth pastors, joined every Christian club I knew, but was never exposed to the practice of evangelism. I attended a Christian college and earned a B.A. in Cross-Cultural Christian Ministry. In one class I learned about the theology of evangelism and memorized some scriptures outlined in a program called Evangelism Explosion but was not exposed to the practice of personal evangelism. As I worked in youth ministry, I enrolled in seminary and earned an M.Div with most of my elective credits in church planting. One of the electives was a course in evangelism and it was the first time in my preparation for ministry that I was forced to engage and reflect in personal evangelism. I struggled on my own to figure out how to form a relationship from which to share because I was so busy with church ministry, seminary and family life. I did what every young pastor or youth pastor does in a small town, I started sitting in the local coffee shop in hopes of striking up a conversation. It was a start, but it would be years before I began to engage competently in what I consider evangelism today. Something is not right in the church when a young adult has to get an M.Div. and pursue church planting before they are challenged to participate in evangelism. My experience is not unique.

The state of evangelism in America is bleak. A 2018 Barna report titled "Reviving Evangelism" uncovered such a picture. The study found most practicing Christians do not consistently support even the idea of evangelism. It would seem encouraging that nine out of ten practicing Christians agreed part of practicing their faith means being a witness for Jesus and eight out of ten strongly agree that "the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus."[1] However, it was also found that 27% believe it is "wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith." Even more alarming, 47% of practicing Christian millennials say it is "wrong" to evangelize.[2] The picture painted in this report is that Christians hold complicated or conflicting views on evangelism. What exactly does "being a witness" look like if it does not involve evangelism? How will "the best thing that could ever happen to someone" actually happen if no one is sharing about Jesus?

If Christians do not believe that evangelism is required of themselves or even good, then it comes as no surprise that few are actually engaged in it. Barna found that 56% of practicing Christians had two or fewer conversations about faith with a non-Christian in the year prior.[3] This is to say nothing of how many have taken the step of sharing the basic content of the gospel or reach the point of a conversation in which they can invite someone to faith in Christ or to repentance. For many Christians and Pastors, sharing faith is nothing more than a good idea that in theory should be done, but very few actively pursue. If it is discouraging to see that

[1] Barna Group, *Reviving Evangelism: Current Realities That Demand a New Vision for Sharing Faith* (California, USA: Barna Group, 2019), 46.

[2] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism*, 10.

[3] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism,* 11.

many Christians do not consistently support evangelism, it is equally discouraging that among those who do support it, there is a significant gap in their belief and their practice.

The Problem in Calvin Presbyterian Church

My experience pastoring a small church in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania bears the truth of these findings. When I began pastoring the Calvin Presbyterian Church I had the audacious idea of being a missionary and forming missionaries to America through an existing church, instead of a church plant. I quickly found that words such as evangelism and expressions like "sharing your faith" were not only foreign to my congregation, but actually had negative connotations in the mainline church. We had an active "Mission Committee" who focused on distributing funds to several national and international organizations but had little to no contact with individuals serving in those organizations, let alone connection to those being reached. Mission in the church had become all about sending a check. The "Evangelism Committee" had been retitled "Outreach Committee" just prior to my arrival. They had no meetings in my first year, and their budget included only two items, stamps and advertising.

Over the course of several years, I preached and taught regularly about the call of all Christians to be witnesses for Christ and participants in his ministry. I recall what seemed to be a never-ending cycle of Sunday School classes and Bible Studies in which the Bible pointed us toward proclamation or evangelism. In each of these studies or classes one of several persons in our small church would quickly remind us of their favorite quote, "Preach the gospel and if

necessary use words." This is often misattributed to St. Francis of Assisi and reflects a false assumption that if Christians simply do good things then others will want to worship Jesus.[4] We tried several mission initiatives in the neighborhood during those years. They included free community meals and a summer lunch program for kids. They brought temporary energy to the church, but enthusiasm waned when the programs did not quickly result in people joining the church or participating in Sunday morning worship. These programs succeeded in establishing a positive reputation of the church in the community, but they fell short of becoming a place for evangelism or life-changing ministry to take place. I believe many saw these programs as superfluous advertising campaigns. The people of the church were not forming relationships, were not willing to talk about faith, and failed to understand what they were doing as essential acts of discipleship. These programs slowly ended.

Finally, I began to see progress in the congregation's understanding of evangelism and the responsibility of all believers to engage in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. I noticed a few less cringes at the word "evangelism" and suggestions of sharing faith in sermons and Bible studies. Eventually discussions on the subject even produced positive ideas and reflections. However, despite the change I saw in understanding, I witnessed very little change in the congregation's engagement in behaviors associated with evangelism. It seemed like I had spent years just spinning my tires.

I was frustrated at my congregation's failure to engage in evangelism, but in my most honest moments I realize I was not much more engaged than they. I was talking and teaching a

[4] Glen Stanton, "FactChekcer: Misquoting Francis of Assisi," The Gospel Coalition, last modified July 10, 2012, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/factchecker-misquoting-francis-of-assisi/.

lot about the biblical mandates related to evangelism, but I struggled to find appropriate relationships or contexts in which I could share and I struggled to offer tangible invitations for my people to engage in evangelism.

Likewise, I had struggled to see spiritual growth and signs of maturity in my congregation for years. Having spent several years as a full-time youth minister, I missed the curiosity and malleable convictions of youth. I found my older, smaller congregation to be stubborn and slow to change. Finally, it seemed the blinders came off and the leaders of the congregation began to take concrete steps toward faithfulness that seemed too hard or risky before. This season involved a risky change in our congregation's denominational affiliation. After more than 125 years in what became known as the Presbyterian Church (USA), we left our local presbytery and joined a presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). It seemed that one step of faithfulness begot another and our leaders were growing. Still, our obedience in evangelism was a step behind our conviction.

One day after a Bible study, an older member of the congregation approached me in frustration and defeat. They shared that although they had been in the church their whole life, serving at the highest levels of leadership and even preaching, they felt as though all their faith experience of the past was suddenly worthless because they were not sharing their faith or practicing evangelism. Now in their late 70's, this person had lived in Ellwood City almost all of their adult life. They said they didn't know anyone who was not a believer or who needed to hear the gospel. Most of their friends are members of our church and very possibly all the rest were members of other local churches. They told about an adult child and several grandchildren who are unchurched, and who had been "shared with" many times over but have

either rejected faith or would self-identify as nominal Christians. The member was explicit about carrying guilt for not engaging in evangelism and not knowing where to start. Aside from some gentle pastoral counseling and affirmation, it suddenly became clear to me that what this person, and many like them in my church needed was not more education in the Bible or lectures and sermons about the responsibility of evangelism. They needed their church and Pastor to help facilitate relationships with non-believers. They needed opportunities to witness evangelism taking place and then to engage in it themselves.

Towards A Local Solution

In October 2019, my church formed a Vision Team tasked specifically with focusing our church's scattered mission efforts in a way that could generate opportunities for evangelism. The church has a legacy of being involved in many diverse local ministries, but in recent decades could not remain substantively involved in all of them. The Vision Team began their work with an in-depth look at the makeup and needs of our community.

At first our attention was focused exclusively on the older members of our community and residents at two apartment complexes near our church for senior citizens. Eventually we met with the manager from one of these buildings and asked her about the needs of the residents. In a rather gruff manner, she described for us how miserable she believed her residents to be. She described them as "depressed," isolated, and "lonely." She described her oldest residents (ages 80 plus) as better connected. They belong to card clubs and have decorated parties for even the most obscure holidays. She described the "younger" residents (ages 65 to 79) as rarely leaving their apartments. They were distrustful and spend surprising

amounts of time watching television and using their cell phones or tablets. At the close of the meeting we said, “Tell us one thing we could do here to improve the overall quality of life for these residents.” She replied, “Anything that gets them out of their rooms and interacting with one another.”

As a congregation of older members in a small town, located in proximity to these apartment complexes, it was natural for us to focus on the older members of our community. However, as the Vision Team examined Census data and engaged in prayer walks, we began to see that our community and neighborhood was not as old as we thought. We were shocked to find that there were more people in our town under the age of 18 than there were over the age of 65.[5] The data opened our eyes to a more obvious indicator that we ought to pay attention to the youth, the fact that our church is located just one block from the high school, middle school and upper elementary campus of the local school district.

As we shifted attention to the youth of our town we began to see the opportunity of our location for reaching kids. For a while the needs of the seniors and our desire to reach youth seemed to be in a tug of war. Thinking it was necessary to choose one or the other, we decided to meet with a school guidance counselor to find out more of the students’ needs.

When we met with the guidance counselor we asked her many of the same questions we did of the building manager for the seniors. We were surprised to find many of the same answers. The guidance counselor described for us the lack of connections and sense of community among students. Reflecting on days when every child was engaged in neighborhood

[5] “QuickFacts: Ellwood City Borough, Pennsylvania; United States,” United States Census Bureau, accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ellwoodcityboroughpennsylvania,US/PST045219.

pick-up games of baseball, on a school sports team or a club, she shared that it is often the same 20-30 kids who make up every club and sports team in the school district. The rest of the children are not engaged at all. We were not surprised that there was mention of video games, cell phones and tablets being a factor in the children's isolation. She also shared about several practical volunteer gaps or needs of the school district. At the end of our meeting we asked what the greatest overall problem or need is that we might aim to address. She replied, "Community and relationships. Anything you can do that connects our kids to the community and gets them out and doing things together would be great."

Community. Relationships. The lights began to come on for our vision team as we heard some of the same words spoken in our previous meeting with the building manager. We saw relationships as the same overall need among seniors as students. We had a tangible sense of the Holy Spirit's leading us and the tension between those on our team focused on seniors and those focused on youth dissipated as we felt God revealing one need in our community: relationships.[6]

An American Problem

The problem of disconnectedness and relationships described by the community members of Ellwood City are not unique to my setting. Americans are increasingly isolated and lonely. From 1985-2004, the General Social Survey by Duke University found that the number of

[6] The Vision Team first noted relationship and community building as an overall need in January 2020. Two months later our community began to experience the isolation brought about in the COVID-19 pandemic. It was providential that God gave us this focus before the pandemic because it allowed us to view isolation and the need for relationship not as a temporary problem related to COVID-19. We were able to see it as a long-term problem we could prepare to meet, even if we could not begin programs for many months. While many churches were halted, we were fortunately poised for very important planning and dreaming.

persons whom responded there is “no one” with whom they discuss “important things” has tripled.[7] Likewise, the 2000 Census revealed that one in four households consist of just one person. This is up from 7% since 1940. There are more people living alone today than at any point in history.[8] In their book, *The Lonely American: Drifting Apart in the Twenty-first Century,* two Harvard psychiatry professors point out that even the widely acknowledged increase in anxiety and depression in our culture is intimately connected with a more common experience of loneliness.[9] Americans in general are becoming more isolated.

I believe one of the contributors to loneliness and social isolation in our day is the increased use of technology. As we are less dependent on one another and able to accomplish more with the help of technology, we find ourselves disconnected from those around us. The availability of information on the internet which a generation before would need to be sought from a relative or neighbor ends up weakening our social ties. The rise of social media as a means of maintaining and sometimes even forming relationships has left us disconnected from reality and from rich relationships. These effects are not limited to any religious group or even generations but affect our society as a whole. Although young people are feeling the effects of social isolation more than some older generations, the demise of connectedness is felt across all generations.

It is plain to see that disconnection is a pervasive and universal problem. Furthermore, it poses a real challenge for evangelism, which is best done in relationship. The space for

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[7] Jacqueline Olds and Richard Schwartz, *The Lonely American: Drifting Apart in the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 2, Proquest Ebook Central.

[8] Olds and Schwartz, *Lonely American,* 2.

[9] Olds and Schwartz, *Lonely American,* 4-5.

"important conversations" such as ones about the gospel of Jesus Christ, is diminishing with our relationships. As America drifts apart, the need for the gospel grows, while the relationships in which to share it deteriorate.

On top of this general societal disconnect, Christians are disconnected from the world in a way that compounds the problem for evangelism. According to Barna's *Reviving Evangelism,* Christians tend to have less religious diversity in their relationships when compared to people of other faiths.[10] Furthermore, they found 38%, or almost two in five, practicing Christians say they have no non-Christian friends or family members. "However willing they may be, Christians' ability to witness for Christ may be impeded by the simple fact that they don't have meaningful relational connections with non-Christians."[11] This finding reveals the common reality shared above by the older member in my congregation who felt they had no relationships with unbelievers from which they could share the gospel. Without relationships with unbelievers, how will Christians ever have opportunity to participate in evangelism?

Notice that the problem my church has in evangelism is the same problem my church found in the world. The church needs richer relationships in our community in order to be faithful to the call of evangelism. The society needs stronger relationships in community for the sake of well-being. By developing rich relationships in our community, the church can simultaneously meet a tangible need in our society and remove one of the common barriers to our faithfulness in evangelism: our lack of relationships with non-believers.

[10] Barna, *Reviving* Evangelism, 18.

[11] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism*, 49.

Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that in a congregation with an already healthy missional identity, engagement in evangelism can be improved by developing relationships between the congregation and a specifically targeted part of the community.[12]

Missional Identity

A healthy missional identity is a necessary prerequisite for most congregations seeking to increase their practice in evangelism.[13] Missional identity is a deeply held conviction that Christians and the church exist personally and corporately to glorify God through participation in his mission to the world. It has already adopted a posture of seeking to fulfil Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). A congregation with a strong missional identity has a general capacity to look outside itself and serve others. Such a congregation must also have the conviction that all Christians are called to participate in evangelism. A missional congregation may or may not be actively engaged in evangelism, but it certainly desires to be.

[12] The word "missional" is used in a generic sense throughout this project to describe a church that understands itself to be on mission. This is not generally in reference to the more specific expression of churches that refer to themselves as part of "missional church movement," which may also fit the more generic description of missional. The missional church movement will be identified and addressed at times throughout the thesis-project as "the missional church" or "the missional church movement." All other uses of the word "missional" are to be taken in the more generic, plain meaning of the word.

[13] Church plants or new worshipping communities have a unique opportunity to expose new and young believers to evangelism as part of discipleship from the beginning. In these unique settings, it is ideal to teach persons that evangelism is a core part of their missional identity.

Evangelism

What is evangelism? How is it defined and what does it look like in practice? Popular definitions or understandings of evangelism range from very broad to very narrow. The traditional understanding plainly defines evangelism as proclaiming the gospel. Such a view is represented by J.I. Packer who writes, "How, then, should evangelism be defined? The answer is simple. According to the New Testament, evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel."[14] Under this narrow definition, evangelism is synonymous with proclamation or preaching.

Today, many others take a view of evangelism that is broadened to include deeds and community. Dean Flemming defines evangelism as "the invitation, through word, deed, and example, for people to follow Christ with their whole lives as part of the Christian community."[15] Bryan Stone approaches evangelism in such a way that any and every Christian act is described as evangelism. For Stone, the very existence of a worshipping community bears witness to the kingdom of God and thus constitutes evangelism.[16] Robert Webber aims to connect evangelism to discipleship and likewise sees the community of believers itself as a form of evangelism.[17] In response to such broad understandings I must reason as William Abraham, "If everything is evangelism, then nothing is evangelism."[18] Even though Flemming, Stone and

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[14] J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 41.

[15] Dean E. Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing, and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, An imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2013), 19.

[16] Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 15.

[17] Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*, Ancient-Future Faith Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003).

Webber each acknowledge proclamation as an essential (if small) part of evangelism, their understanding leaves room for one to conclude that they are participants in evangelism simply by belonging to the community of believers. Consequently, someone else, a preacher perhaps, might fulfill the proclamation part of evangelism for them.

The word evangelism comes from the Greek εὐαγγελίζω, used in the New Testament.[19] Generically it can mean to "bring good news, announce good news" (as used in Luke 1:19). More specifically, it often means "to proclaim the divine message of salvation, proclaim the gospel." For example, Jesus states in Luke 4:43 that he must "preach the good news (εὐαγγελίζω) of the kingdom of God." It is clear in these definitions and examples of usage that verbal proclamation is essential in the meaning of the word itself. For these reasons, I employ the narrower understanding of evangelism as proclamation of the gospel. While this is technically accurate, it remains important to expound upon this understanding further by placing evangelism within the context of broader Christian life and participation in the mission of God or missio Dei.

Evangelism in Context

Throwing a baseball is a straightforward and easily defined skill. Whenever someone actually throws a baseball it happens within a particular context. For example, the thrower has a definitive level of strength. The way a toddler throws a baseball is certainly not the same as a

[18] William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989), 44.

[19] William F. Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 402.

professional athlete. Likewise, the form or technique of the thrower can be analyzed and improved upon by identifying micro movements within the throw. The purpose or intent of the thrower is also part of the context. Are they trying to throw a strike to a batter or throw for distance? Is the ball thrown with an intent for it to be caught by a particular individual whose strength and context might also be relevant to how the ball is thrown?

While evangelism as proclaiming the gospel is a straightforward definition, it is an activity that takes place in a wider context of relationship with God and relationship with others, much like throwing a baseball in the context of a game. For the purposes of analyzing an individual or congregation's engagement in evangelism it is helpful then to name some of these activities that make up the context of evangelism. To that end I have identified several Christian practices which create a context for evangelism. These practices do not constitute evangelism in themselves but naming them in relation to or as context for evangelism will be helpful in later measuring an individual or congregation's overall engagement or readiness to engage in evangelism. I will introduce these practices briefly here and demonstrate their theological foundations in Chapter 2.

All eight practices are considered relational. The first three practices pertain to relationship with God: (1) being led by the Holy Spirit, (2) practicing prayer and (3) understanding the gospel. The other five practices pertain to relationship with others: (1) developing relationships, (2) asking questions and listening to others, (3) speaking about Jesus, (4) participating in table fellowship and (5) extending invitation.

Led by the Holy Spirit

Relationships with those outside the church are irrelevant to evangelism if there is not first relationship with God. Christians engage in evangelism from the context of a Spirit-filled life. Even while Christians must be faithful to share the content of the gospel, it is the Holy Spirit that convicts of sin and ultimately converts people to faith. Therefore, one's obedience and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit are relevant to their practice of evangelism. R. York Moore offers very practical advice on listening for the Holy Spirit's guidance in practicing evangelism.[20] Likewise, Michael Frost includes listening for the Spirit's voice as one of the five habits of highly missional people.[21] Christians who engage in evangelism or who are ready to engage in evangelism will listen for the Spirit's guiding.

Prayer

Believers practicing evangelism will do so while praying for those they invite to respond. "We should pray for those whom we seek to win, that the Holy Spirit will open their hearts…"[22] Even those who have not yet discovered the courage or conviction to share the gospel might begin by praying for those whom they wish to see repent and receive Christ. This is also a way of drawing our attention to the will of God in regards to any particular individual. By submitting to the Father's will in prayer, the pray-er is also changed and prepared to participate in the

[20] R. York Moore, *Growing Your Faith by Giving It Away: Telling the Gospel Story with Grace and Passion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005) 42-51.

[21] Michael Frost, *Surprise the World!: The Five Habits of Highly Missional People* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016), 57.

[22] Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 123.

Father's mission. This is what David Fitch has in mind when he describes "kingdom prayer" as one of the seven disciplines that shape the church for mission.[23] J. Mack Stiles also acknowledges the importance of such prayers in the practice of evangelism. Stiles attributes this quote to Charles Spurgeon, "Lord, save the elect, and elect some more!" and himself adds, "Make it a discipline to pray regularly for those who do not know Christ to come to him."[24]

Understanding the Gospel

It is plain that if someone cannot summarize the gospel for themselves, they will never share it meaningfully with others. There are many models or tools for summarizing the gospel, but any summary should include that Christ died for the forgiveness of sin, was raised on the third day, and extends the promise of life to all who believe in him. An individual must first have some degree of confidence in the basic content this message before they can share it.

Relationships

Evangelism takes place in the context of relationship. Wherever there is communication there is relationship. That relationship can be distant or intimate. A close friendship offers intimate relation in which to share the gospel. A consumer hearing the gospel over the radio is in a much more distant relationship. If Christians are to engage in strategic evangelism, they must have meaningful relationships with non-believers. The relational context of evangelism is

[23] David E. Fitch, *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines That Shape the Church for Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016), 171.

[24] J. Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*, 9marks: Building Healthy Churches. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 96.

easily overlooked but it's importance must be explicit. The role of relationship in evangelism will be explored in more detail as the hypothesis of this thesis-project is expounded below.

Asking Questions and Listening to Others

Most evangelism takes place in the context of conversation. This is critical to the contemporary context in Western Culture. Barna's 2019 study titled *Reviving Evangelism*, uncovered the number one quality non-Christians and lapsed Christians desire in someone with whom they will talk about faith is listening without judgment. Not far down the list is someone who is "good at asking questions."[25] Effective evangelism today cannot mean simply transmitting the content of the gospel, it must also involve asking questions and listening to the concerns, beliefs, or questions of others. David Geisler and Norman Geisler offer a strategy of pre-evangelism and evangelism based on asking questions and listening in the context of conversations.[26] As Christians engage in evangelism, they must learn to ask questions and listen well to the hearts and minds of others in conversation.

Speaking about Jesus

Many Christians not only fail to participate in evangelism, but they fail to speak of Jesus in general. If someone is not in the habit of speaking about Jesus with their family or in their church, then they are not likely to begin speaking about Jesus or sharing the gospel with a non-

[25] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism,* 54.

[26] David Geisler and Norman L Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism: Connecting with People to Share Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Pub., 2014).

Christian or seeker. Likewise, if one is not in the habit of sharing personal testimony in the church or their Christian family, they are not likely to begin sharing testimony outside the church or Christian family. Persons who engage or are ready to engage in evangelism will regularly speak of Jesus in all settings.

Table Fellowship

Another strategic context for evangelism is table fellowship. This Is closely related to and feeds the dynamic of relationship but can be isolated as a practice in itself. Jesus was known to eat and drink with sinners. Craig Springer suggests "one of the forgotten ways of effective evangelism is the power of groups exploring together, in conversation, around a table."[27] So also, David Fitch describes table fellowship with non-believers and seekers as one of the seven disciplines that shape the church for mission. He describes each discipline in three circles, a closed circle, dotted circle and half circle. The solid circle of table fellowship for believers is the Lord's Table. Fitch describes the dotted circle and half circle as an extension of the Lord's Supper. These are meals where believers and non-believers share table fellowship either in the home of a believer (dotted circle) or the non-believer (half circle). [28] Similarly, Frost also includes eating once a week with non-believers as one of his five habits.[29]

[27] Craig Springer, *How to Revive Evangelism*: *7 Vital Shifts in How We Share Our Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 141-142.

[28] Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 56.

[29] Frost, *Surprise the World,* 41.

Invitation

Lastly, invitation is inherent to the practice or context of evangelism. Becky Pippert puts it plainly in her popular book *Out of the Saltshaker & into the* World, "The truth is, the announcement of the gospel is not enough. As witnesses and servants of Christ, we are called to seek a commitment to Christ."[30] This is inherent to evangelism. Sharing the gospel is not an end in itself, it is a necessary part of inviting others to salvation in Jesus Christ. Many include this element or context in the definition of evangelism itself. For David Bosch, evangelism may be defined

> as that dimension and activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, *with a view to embracing him as Savior* (emphasis added), becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth.[31]

A similar dynamic is offered by Stiles in his definition: "Evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade."[32] As it is recognized today that conversion is often the result of a long journey, it is helpful to recognize invitation not only as the final step in sharing the gospel, but also that there are many invitations along the way to complete acceptance of Christ which can be offered. For example, an invitation to read the Bible, to worship, or to repent, or to pray in the name of Jesus, may all be steps taken toward Jesus that may not constitute a full acceptance of Jesus and his gospel, but are nonetheless invitations worth extending to one who

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[30] Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker & into the World: Evangelism As a Way of Life,* 20th anniversary rev. & expanded ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 177.

[31] David Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-Currents Today," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, eds. Paul Wesley Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 17.

[32] Stiles, *Evangelism,* 26.

may be journeying toward Christ. Such invitations help to form the context and practice of evangelism.

Evangelism is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. The practice of evangelism is executed by believers in relationship with God who are led by the Spirit, pray for non-believers, and understand the gospel. From relationship with God, believers then develop meaningful relationships with non-believers, ask questions and listen to others, speak about Jesus habitually, participate in table fellowship with non-believers, and invite others into faith. This list is not exhaustive and none of these actions constitute evangelism in themselves, but they will be helpful in assessing the engagement and readiness of believers and congregations in evangelism.

Relationships and Evangelism

Relationships play a central role in evangelism. As stated above, wherever there is communication there is relationship, distant or intimate. To the extent that evangelism involves communication, it involves relationship. Therefore, all evangelism takes place in the context of relationship. Furthermore, personal evangelism is arguably the most effective form of evangelism, and it relies most heavily on relationship.[33] Relationships in personal evangelism are so important that some call it "relational evangelism."

It is also easy to see that relationship directly impacts many of the eight practices described as a context for evangelism above. For example, table-fellowship or eating with non-

[33] Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Models of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 12.

believers is a sign of and step toward meaningful relationship. So also, asking questions and listening takes place within and strengthens relationship.

One of the first steps toward engaging in evangelism is developing meaningful relationships with non-believers. Pippert discusses the frustration Pastors share with her about how ineffective their congregations are at engaging in evangelism. One of her three suggestions is to "encourage [church members] to not only build friendships with seekers but to introduce their seeker friends to fellow Christians."[34] Likewise, Priscilla Pope-Levison states in her summary of steps toward personal evangelism that the next step after "raise your evangelistic temperature" is to "foster the relationship."[35]

Relationships must be developed at a personal level, but it is also possible for relationships to be developed with or as a group. If a congregation simply aims to develop relationships in the community it will be easy to spread their efforts thin. If the congregation targets a particular subgroup of the community, it will be easier and more effective in connecting. This is true in any marketing campaign or business strategy as well. It is always better to aim at a specific group. Likewise, even if a congregation succeeds in forming relationships in a broad community, the congregation itself would be known only as individuals. Alternatively, if the congregation as a group becomes known to a specific subset of the community, their efforts are multiplied in that the congregation becomes recognized as a community itself.

[34] Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker,* 239.

[35] Pope-Levison, *Models of Evangelism*, 22.

Relationships are a practical need in our society. Relationships with non-believers are lacking among Christians. Relationships are critical to evangelism. It stands to reason that forming relationships between the people of a congregation and a targeted group of people in the community will increase engagement or readiness to engage in evangelism.

Thesis-Project

My thesis-project will apply this hypothesis to Calvin Presbyterian Church in Ellwood City, PA. The church is aiming to build relationships with the two subgroups identified above by their vision team: senior citizens and students.[36]

The church will specifically seek to build relationships with seniors through engaging residents at Crescent Place and R.J. Schill Manor.[37] These are apartment complexes located respectively across the street and within a block of the church. Crescent Place is run by the Lawrence County Housing Authority and contains 48 apartments, currently filled with mostly single occupants. Schill Manor is privately owned and contains 70 apartments, also currently filled with mostly single occupants. Both buildings prioritize residents over 65, with exceptions only for those with disabilities. The church will hold monthly fellowship events at each building. These monthly fellowship events will provide opportunities for residents and members of the church alike to form meaningful relationships.

[36] Throughout the rest of this thesis-project senior citizens will be referred to simply as seniors.

[37] Throughout the rest of this thesis-project R.J. Schill Manor will be referred to simply as Schill Manor, as it is commonly called in Ellwood City.

The church will seek to build relationships with students by funneling members as volunteers with an after-school ministry called Kids Quest. Kids Quest is an independent 501(c)(3) formed by the Calvin Presbyterian Church specifically to evangelize children. The church has renovated and repurposed their fellowship hall into a children's gym to house the ministry. The hope is that by placing volunteers in this ministry they will have opportunity to form substantive relationships with students and possibly their families.

In addition to these specific means of building relationships, there will be several other general efforts to prepare persons for engaging in evangelism. Aside from the specific programs above, the church will generally target students and seniors in their ministry. They have assigned a Deacon to each apartment complex and a Deacon to focus on providing care to students and families in the school district.[38] There will also be sermons preached around the topic of evangelism to continually nurture the church's missional posture and develop their understanding of evangelism. There will also be an evangelism discussion group, training, and seminar. My thesis-project will chronicle these efforts and aim to measure their effect on the congregation's engagement or readiness to engage in evangelism.

Testing the Hypothesis

Before this project can be determined effective or not, it is necessary to first demonstrate that the congregation already has a clear missional identity. If the congregation does not already possess conviction about evangelism or demonstrate their responsibility to

[38] Deacons in the Calvin Presbyterian Church are charged generally with ministries of mercy and compassion in the congregation and community.

participate in the missio Dei, then no amount of relationship building will result in more evangelism. Since so few congregations seem to understand these concepts, and because I know that my own congregation has not always grasped them, it will be important as a prerequisite to verify and document their missional identity.

Missional Posture Survey

Dr. Ken Priddy, of the GO Center has developed a tool called the Missional Posture Assessment.[39] It ranks a church's posture as anti-missional, non-missional, pre-missional, pro-missional or post-missional. The tool uses a survey consisting of 50 statements that correspond to each of the missional postures. The survey was developed using many actual statements from persons in congregations that Dr. Priddy had worked with over the years. Respondents indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a scale of "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," with no neutral responses. The totals of each respondent are added together to indicate a congregation's score in each posture. The posture with the highest score indicates the congregation's primary missional posture. If the survey revealed significant "anti-missional" posture in my congregation, it would make engagement in evangelism very difficult and would likely undermine the goals of the project. Conversely, a high "pro-missional" score would indicate at least a readiness to pursue engagement in evangelism.

In January 2021, I used the Missional Posture Assessment tool to determine the missional posture of Calvin Presbyterian Church. Dr. Priddy indicated that the tool is useful even

[39] See Appendix A.

if used only among the leadership of a congregation. Over the course of several weeks, I received 39 complete responses out of 50 active participants in the congregation.[40] This is considered a very high sample rate and gave me a picture not only of our leadership's missional posture but the posture of the congregation as a whole. The results of the assessment indicated a clear primary posture of pro-missional, with secondary postures of pre- and post-missional.[41] These results were ideal, indicating a majority of the people active in my congregation were on board with the missional direction of the church and were in an optimal place to begin focusing on relationships and evangelism in the community.

Evangelism Questionnaire

Having established a healthy missional posture, the effectiveness of my thesis will be tested using an Anonymous Questionnaire which I have designed myself.[42] It will be administered before the ministries designed to form relationships are implemented, and again at least six months after the ministries have begun. The questionnaire consists of 18 statements asking for a level of agreement on a scale of 1-5, from "Strongly Agee" to "Strongly Disagree." The first 17 questions are designed to assess an individual's engagement or readiness to engage in evangelism, as defined above. The statements assess explicit participation in sharing the content of the gospel, as well as participation in the context of behaviors that contribute to evangelism listed above: being led by the Spirit, prayer for non-believers, understanding the

[40] The total size of the congregation was hard to establish because the assessment was run during a time when participation was affected by COVID-19 precautions.

[41] See Appendix B.

[42] See Appendix C.

gospel, developing relationships, asking questions and listening to others, speaking about Jesus, sharing in table fellowship with non-believers, and inviting others into steps of faith. There are also questions designed to determine if a respondent has participated in any of the programs aimed at building relationships, and if the respondent has served formally as a leader in the congregation during the course of the project.

Advancing The Hypothesis

Chapter 2 will build a biblical case for the importance of community and relationships in evangelism. Some attention will also be given to scriptures which demonstrate the behaviors which form the context of evangelism outlined above. Chapter 3 will include a literature review of books and resources that seek to implement evangelism in the church. Special attention will be given to resources that place a high value on the role of community or relationships in evangelism. Chapter 4 will chronicle my efforts to implement the hypothesis in the ministries and efforts of the church. Chapter 5 will analyze the effectiveness of these efforts using the results of the questionnaire administered before and after the project, as well as researcher field observations collected throughout. Finally, I will draw some conclusions and suggest how the results of this project may be useful for other missional congregations seeking to increase their engagement in evangelism.

CHAPTER TWO

A THEOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIP IN THE MISSION OF GOD AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Theology Matters

The aim of this thesis-project is to increase engagement in evangelism by forming personal relationships between a church and its community. Even if the project were to prove by example that this happened in a particular setting, it would not necessarily be a compelling reason for anyone else to begin a similar pursuit. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, not everyone is convinced they should engage in evangelism to begin with. Many would be content delegating evangelism to an "evangelism committee," or relationships to a "fellowship committee," so that everyone else can enjoy their preferred method of engagement in the church. Others might concede that relationships made a difference in one setting but that they prefer to find another way to engage in evangelism. Further, if this project fails to increase engagement in evangelism, one could falsely be led to think that forming personal relationships is thus not an important part of evangelism. So then, if not for reasons of effectiveness alone, why should every church and believer have relationships with non-believers and engage in personal evangelism? How can theology, the Bible, or redemption history help us to build context for practicing evangelism?

The Missio Dei

In the early 20th Century, the global Protestant church's common interests centered around mission and missionary activity. From 1928, The International Missionary Council

gathered churches from around the world to further Christian mission. The World Council of Churches was formed later, in 1948, and "soon the incongruence of a council of churches and a missionary council existing side by side was making itself felt."[1] Is the mission second to the church itself? Should the church be second to mission? A similar tension is felt in many churches over mission committees and the larger life of the church. At the next IMC gathering in 1952, a more appropriate understanding began to take shape. Neither the church nor mission were the starting point, the two were inseparably joined under the missio Dei, which precedes them.[2] The missio Dei is still a dominant and effective theological framework for ecclesiology, mission and evangelism today. It's importance is almost universally recognized in the world church today and has been especially influential in the evangelical church and the missional church movement. This concept of missio Dei points toward an understanding of mission and evangelism for the church that is inherently relational and commissions all believers.

Even before tracing the theme of missio Dei through scripture, it is worth noting that the whole of scripture itself should be read through a missional hermeneutic. The Bible is the word of God, a self-given revelation of our Creator to his people and the world. This self-giving revelation is itself missional. "The writings that now comprise our Bible are themselves the product of and witness to the ultimate mission of God."[3] Christopher J. H. Wright establishes

[1] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth anniversary ed., American Society of Missiology Series, No. 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 379.

[2] Missio Dei means "mission of God."

[3] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 48.

and applies this hermeneutic well. "In short, a missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that *the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation.*"[4] It is with this hermeneutic that I will trace theme of relationship and the missio Dei through the Bible and redemptive history below.

The missio Dei flows out of God's own Trinitarian being, which is inherently relational. The coinage of the term missio Dei itself can be traced back to 1928 when German missiologist Karl Hartenstein used it to summarize Karl Barth's connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and mission. "So the phrase originally meant 'the sending of God'—in the sense of the Father's sending of the Son and their sending of the Holy Spirit."[5] While full comprehension of the Trinity and the relation of the three distinct persons comprising one true God remain beyond us, it remains clear that relationship is an immutable part of God's being. Jesus, who is himself the "image of the invisible God" and "exact imprint of his nature," reveals some very relational dynamics of the Trinity.[6] The relational nature of the Trinity is expressed in Jesus' exclusive claims of "knowing" the Father in Matthew 11:27, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." So also the expression of "love" between Father and Son in the gospels point to genuine relationship within the Trinity. God the Father says to Jesus at his baptism,

[4] Wright, *The Mission of God,* 51.

[5] Wright, *The Mission of God,* 62-63.

[6] Col 1:15; Heb 1:3. All Scripture references are taken from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible unless otherwise stated.

"This is my son, whom I love; with whom I am well pleased."[7] Jesus likewise speaks of his own love for the Father, "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."[8] The language of Father and Son itself is undeniably relational. The scandal of such relationship was not lost on the Jews, who regularly proclaim at the beginning of the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."[9] Thus the Jews sought to kill Jesus, "because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God."[10] God's revelation of himself to humanity as Triune and relational is foundational, but it is only one example of relationship in the missio Dei.

A summary of redemption history reveals significant place given to God's relationship with humanity in the missio Dei. The Westminster Larger Catechism begins with the question answer, "The primary and highest purpose of human beings is to glorify God and to enjoy him completely forever."[11] Relationship is implied in the enjoyment that is meant to last forever. Genesis 1 and 2 describe how the Triune God made humanity in his image, as the capstone of creation. In Genesis 3:8 God is described as casually walking in the garden of Eden. There in the garden, as things were intended to be, God dwelled with humanity in a way that allowed for intimate relationship. With the mandate of Genesis 1:28 to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" God intended for Eden and the presence of humanity made in his image to expand and

[7] Matt 3:17 (NIV).

[8] John 14:31.

[9] Deut 6:4.

[10] John 5:18.

[11] Evangelical Presbyterian Church, *The Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English*, third ed. (Livonia, MI: Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 2010), 59.

fill the earth. G.K. Beale and Mitchell Kim describe the garden itself as a temple God created to fill with his presence and to extend to the ends of the earth via the multiplication of humanity created in his image.[12] Creation begins with God in close relationship with humanity, at home with them in the garden, and with a plan to expand.

When sin entered the world, Adam and Eve were removed from the garden. God's presence in relationship with humanity was changed. However, as redemption history begins to unfold, we quickly see God's presence and relationship breaking back in. Throughout Genesis, in the covenant of Abraham, and the period of the patriarchs, there is occasional presence and implied relationship with God. In Exodus it becomes clear that God is setting aside Israel as a people for himself. The exodus of Israel from Egypt is one of the defining moments of the Old Testament. In Exodus 6 God clarifies to a fearful Moses the end goal of the mighty deliverance to come. "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."[13] Christopher J. H. Wright notes this as an "occasion par excellence" of how God revealed himself to Israel. "The only thing that Israel will do in the whole scenario is that they will come to *know YHWH* conclusively as God through these events…They would know who was truly God in Egypt (and everywhere else)."[14]

The relational nature of God's presence with Israel became tangible when he revealed that he will dwell with them in the tabernacle. "I will dwell among the people of Israel and will

[12] G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 17-28.

[13] Exod. 6:7

[14] Wright, *The Mission of* God, 76.

be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God."[15] God's desire to be in right relationship and dwell with his people is evident.

Even as God demonstrates his will to dwell with and in relationship to his people, the problem of sin remains a barrier. While the tabernacle marks a significant beginning to the formal return of God's presence and relationship with Israel, the temple would later be established as a more permanent dwelling place of God among his people. In both these structures it is clear God's relationship and presence with Israel requires the problem of sin to be dealt with. There are barriers of separation such as the Holy of Holies and a requirement of animal sacrifices for the atonement of sin. The holy presence of God and his glory remains very dangerous to the unholy Israelites.

The Old Testament prophets looked forward to a day when God's presence would be among them more permanently. In the context of covenant unfaithfulness and resultant exile, the Israelites longed for a full return from exile and restoration of God's presence in the temple. Ezekiel 37 prophesies of a more permanent presence. "My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."[16] This same prophecy also points beyond God's relationship with Israel to a coming relationship with the nations. Similarly, Isaiah 2 describes a time when all the nations will be drawn to the temple.[17]

[15] Exod 29:45-46.

[16] Ezek 37:27-28.

[17] Isa 2:3.

Furthermore, Isaiah 54 reads, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities."[18] Beale and Kim connect this expanding tent to the temple and to Eden. They also draw parallels between these verses and the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs about expanding their families.[19] They see these promises as moving toward the fulfillment of God's original mandate for Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth with his image in Genesis 1:28.

The missio Dei progresses again when God takes on flesh and enters the world in Jesus of Nazareth. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."[20] The word for "dwelt" in this verse can be literally translated, "tabernacled."[21] So also, Jesus is called Emmanuel, "God with us." Thus, Jesus advances the presence of God in the world and God's relationship with humanity. The incarnation is a significant concept in literature of the missional church movement. Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile list it as one of four most common themes in North American missional literature.[22]

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[18] Isa 54:2-3.

[19] Beale and Kim, *God Dwells Among Us,* 68-69.

[20] John 1:14.

[21] Beale and Kim, *God Dwells Among Us*, 92.

[22] Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, The Missional Network (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 4.

Jesus not only comes as the complete revelation of God his Father, indwelt by the Holy Spirt, he also comes to deal with the separation introduced by sin, which had previously inhibited God's presence and relationship with Israel. In Jesus' death on the cross he became the substitutionary atonement for sin. Jesus not only replaced the sacrificial system, he also replaced the temple itself. In John 2 Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."[23] Then at his crucifixion the connection between Jesus' atoning death and the expanding presence of God became explicit, "And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."[24] The barrier between the glory and presence of God that had been introduced in the tabernacle and remained in the temple was broken. Beale and Kim masterfully connect Jesus' ministry here to the beginnings of a new creation, Israel and the temple.

> In this manner, Jesus inaugurates a new creation as a true latter-day Adam, since he is inaugurating and expanding a new eschatological temple, which the first Adam should have done in the beginning of the first creation. Likewise, Jesus does what old Israel failed to do, which included establishing and widening the temple of God's presence to bring in the nations.[25]

After his resurrection, Jesus fully enjoins the disciples and his church to the missio Dei in the Great Commission. "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I

[23] John 2:19.

[24] Matt 27:51.

[25] Beale and Kim, *God Dwells Among Us*, 93.

have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"[26] Just as the Father sent the Son, the Son has now sent his disciples. While these verses had received relatively little attention in centuries past, they have come to play a central role in mission focused churches today. These words are not a tangent end to Matthew's gospel, but just as the whole of scripture is read in a missional lens, so all of Matthew's gospel is interpreted through the lens of the Great Commission. "Today, scholars agree that the entire gospel points to these final verses: all the threads woven into the fabric of Matthew, from chapter 1 onwards, draw together here."[27] Finally, when the disciples receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples and the church become fully equipped to carry out the missio Dei. The church exists for the sake of advancing the missio Dei.

Indwelt and empowered by God's presence in the Holy Spirit, the church is tasked with bearing faithful witness to what God has done and is doing in in Jesus Christ. Jesus says about the Holy Spirit, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."[28] As was the ministry of Christ, the church's ministry of witness is also inherently relational. The relational nature of bearing witness and the relational nature of the gospel itself is highlighted in Paul's word to the Corinthians,

> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of

[26] Matt 28:18-20.

[27] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 58.

[28] Acts 1:8.

> reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.[29]

Being "ambassadors for Christ" means bearing witness. "The ministry of reconciliation" is the restoration of relationship with God through Christ. As ambassadors then, we are sent to engage in relationship on Christ's behalf, with a mission of restoring relationship between humanity and God.

The language of "temple" applied to the church in the New Testament adds dimension to the role of believers in exhibiting and expanding the relational presence of God in the world. When most Christians talk about themselves as God's temple they have in mind the call to holiness, but Paul's words in 2 Corinthians also emphasize the relational presence of God associated with the temple, "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' Therefore go out from their midst…then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."[30] In Ephesians Paul applies the image to the church again, with emphasis on relationship and expansion.

> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are *fellow citizens* with the saints and *members of the household of God*, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, *grows* into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (emphasis added).[31]

[29] 2 Cor 5:18-20.

[30] 2 Cor 6:16-18.

[31] Eph 2:19-22.

The church, as the household of God and temple in the Lord, is to be growing. The paradigm of Eden as God's temple and the expansion of God's presence in creation traced through redemption history and applied here to the church adds significant understanding to the church's participation in the missio Dei.

Finally, the missio Dei will be fulfilled at Jesus' return in the new heavens, new earth, and new Jerusalem described in Revelation 21-22. God's presence with humanity in the new Jerusalem is a fulfillment of what Eden was meant to be, and the importance of God's relational presence with humanity is once again central. "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."[32] The temple theme traced by Beale and Kim is also explicitly fulfilled, "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."[33] Further, where God's throne was once limited to his heavenly throne and the footstool as the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies within the Jerusalem temple, the throne is now found in the new earth without restriction, "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him."[34] In the new Jerusalem, the fullness of God's glory and presence will fill the earth in absence of evil, as originally intended at creation.

[32] Rev 21:3.

[33] Rev 21:22.

[34] Rev 22:3.

Missio Dei Applied to Evangelism

This greater framework of the missio Dei above provides a necessary backdrop for addressing the church's mission and the narrower topic of evangelism in this project. The church's participation in the missio Dei must be as thoroughly relational as the rest of redemption history. Relationship should play as central a role in the church's mission and evangelism as it does in the missio Dei. This has several practical implications for the church's participation in mission and evangelism today.

The missio Dei establishes that the mission of the church cannot be separated from the church itself. As seen above, the church exists within the missio Dei, and therefore it's mission cannot be separated from its identity. This applies collectively and individually. Each individual person of the church is responsible for participating in God's mission. Likewise, the specific practice of evangelism as proclamation cannot be separated from the broader mission of God and his church. There is often a tug of war amongst Christians between demonstration and proclamation of the gospel. Some prefer to live out the good news without proclamation or evangelism, while others see evangelism as the primary method of mission. Christopher J. H. Wright addresses this in his application of missional theology for the church and speaks of "integral mission." Integral mission puts evangelism and social responsibility as equally essential. He also offers the analogy of a wheel and hub. Perhaps evangelism is the central hub of the wheel, but without the rim of Christian engagement, the wheel ceases to function.[35]

[35] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 277-278.

As God pursues intimacy with broken humanity, so we should pursue intimacy with those who are lost. If God says in 2 Cor. 6:16-18 that his ultimate aim is "to be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me," then it should be our aim to be as "brothers and sisters" to the world, for that is what we will be when our mission is fulfilled. In the meantime, it is strategic and theologically appropriate to begin forming positive relationships in which to share the gospel or evangelize. We should seek to know others and be known in our communities. Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile name this relational identification with neighbor as a common stream of conversation in missional churches seeking to live out the theme of incarnation which is central in the missio Dei. This is to be done in an intentionally humble, even cruciform way.

> This realization suggests an incarnational approach to missional church in which relational identification with neighbor leads us into concrete acts of solidarity and accompaniment. If God loves us in Christ, so that God identifies with us relationally in a posture of humility, then we are to share this same love with our neighbors. The corollary of God's bearing humanity in Christ is the church's bearing the burdens of its neighbors as it participates deeply in the life and struggle of the community into which it is sent and within which it lives.[36]

Thus, humility and a willingness to co-suffer should be marks of the relationships Christians develop in a community.

The missio Dei extends the mandate to multiply in Genesis to the church today through the Great Commission and compels us to action in evangelism. Just as the presence of God in the world was meant to increase from creation through all of the redemption history, the church is to continue growing and filling the world with persons baptized in the name of Triune God. This happens by means of evangelistic proclamation. For, "How then will they call on him

[36] Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 115.

in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"[37] The mandate of multiplication may seem like common sense in the context of a project on evangelism, but in small churches that make up a majority of the churched population in America, growth and multiplication seem anything but common. However, the church cannot allow itself to accept a defeated attitude or a posture of defense in the world. We must remember that just as Israel in exile looked forward to a day when all nations would come to the temple to seek God, we must look forward to a day when the kingdom of God will be the only kingdom.

The missio Dei compels us to pursue redemptive relationships with sinners. God has been on a relentless pursuit to reconcile and dwell with humanity throughout redemption history and he has founded his church to join him in that mission. We should seek to intentionally build relationships outside the family of believers, with those trapped in darkness, that we might bear witness to the light of Christ. Paul applies this principle throughout his ministry and describes it in 1 Corinthians 9,

> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.[38]

[37] Rom 10:14

[38] 1 Cor 9:19-23.

We must be willing to engage selflessly in pursuing relationship with others that we might win more of them.

Christians must be careful in applying these ideas not to miss the warnings against sin and compromise in witness that permeate the New Testament. As it is one danger for the church to disengage from relationship with the world and evangelism it is another danger for the church to become so much like the world that it fails to be distinguished as light in the darkness or salt of the earth.

Biblical Theology for the Practice of Evangelism

It was established in Chapter 1 that evangelism can be understood narrowly as the proclamation of the gospel, but are all Christians expected to evangelize? Is it appropriate for the church to delegate evangelism entirely to subgroups of Christians such as pastors or those with the spiritual gift of evangelism? There are some who explicitly deny the call for every believer to be engaged in evangelism or resist any emphasis on its importance.[39] Even prominent missiologist David Bosch understands the church's role in mission to be more attractional and deeds driven, leaving select individuals such as Paul to carry the mission forward. He writes,

> Paul's whole argument is that the attractive lifestyle of the small Christian communities gives credibility to the missionary outreach in which he and his fellow-workers are involved. The primary responsibility of 'ordinary' Christians is not to go out and preach, but to support the mission project through their appealing conduct and by making 'outsiders' feel welcome in their midst.[40]

[39] For example, see Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).

[40] Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 140.

Indeed, the explicit command for all believers to be involved in the proclamation of evangelism is less apparent in the New Testament than the general call to be engaged in God's mission. However, Robert Plummer provides a better explanation for Paul's apparent emphasis on faithful living. "It is likely that many of the churches that Paul addresses were already active in making known the gospel, so his main concern is not that they *begin* proclaiming the gospel, but that they *confirm* their witness through a faithful lifestyle."[41]

Furthermore, the letters of the New Testament positively provide direct and indirect instructions for Christians to evangelize. Robert Plummer makes a comprehensive case in his book, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* Among other examples, Plummer points to Ephesians 6, where Paul describes the cosmic battle the church is engaged in, calling them to put on and "take up the whole armor of God."[42] Regarding equipment for the feet in verse 15, Plummer makes a strong case for the NRSV's translation, which reads, "As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace." Further, the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" in verse 17 is clearly an offensive weapon. "For a Christian to wield the 'sword of the Spirit' appears to mean that a Christian would so adhere to and announce the gospel that the 'word of God' would advance in its victorious course."[43] This is

[41] Robert L. Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?,* Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 96.

[42] Eph 6:13.

[43] Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission,* 80.

just one among several direct examples of the command for Christians to evangelize.[44] The church and Christians are expected to be engaged in evangelism.

What does evangelism in the Bible look like? Eight practices forming a context for evangelism and pertaining to relationship with God and others were identified in Chapter 1. Below I will explore the biblical foundations of these practices.

Relationship with God

The first relationship relevant to evangelism is God's relationship with us. The flow of thought in 1 John 4 is instructive. "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son… Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."[45] Likewise, God's relationship with us precedes our redemptive relationships with others. This is already evident in the missio Dei above. There are three evangelistic practices pertaining to our relationship with God.

Being Led by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays a central role in the practice of evangelism. Acts 1:8 makes a clear tie between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the church's power to be Christ's witnesses. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Witness is

[44] Plummer also points to careful understandings Philippians 2:14-16 and Paul's various commands for the churches to "imitate" himself in the 1 and 2 Corinthains as examples of direct instructions to evangelize. See Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of Mission*, 72- 96.

[45] 1 John 4:10-11.

closely tied to proclamation and is part of evangelism. Indeed, when the Holy Spirit is received at Pentecost, the church's Spirit-filled ministry begins.

Holy Spirit is the direct agent of evangelism several times in Acts. In Acts 4:8 Peter is described as being "filled with the Holy Spirit" as he proclaims the gospel to the council in Jerusalem. After being reprimanded and ordered to stop preaching, the disciples gathered to pray for boldness and courage to continue. "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."[46] Being filled with the Holy Spirit here is directly tied to their faithfulness in speaking the word of God. In Acts 11 Peter meets with the church in Jerusalem to defend his ministry to the Gentiles. He describes being sent by the Spirit to Cornelious in order to give them a message by which they would be saved.[47] The Holy Spirit's agency in evangelism is also indicated in Acts 16 when the Holy Spirit forbids Paul and company from speaking the word in Asia.[48] Here and throughout Acts, sharing "the word" is synonymous with sharing the content of the gospel, which we refer to today as evangelism. In each of these instances above, the Holy Spirit is directly involved in evangelism as the verbal proclamation of the gospel.

The Holy Spirit is also seen in Acts to be involved in the broader context of evangelism by way of leading and guiding the disciples. In Acts 8, the Spirit speaks to Philip, instructing him to approach the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch in verse 29. Philip is able then to evangelize to

[46] Acts 4:31.

[47] Acts 11:12-14.

[48] Acts 16:6-7.

the eunuch, and after Philip baptizes him, “the Spirit of the Lord carried [him] away.”[49] Likewise the Spirit directs Peter toward Cornelius in Caesarea by speaking to him in Acts 10:19. In each of these examples the apostles are seen to be led and instructed by the Holy Spirit for the sake of evangelizing.

As the Holy Spirit empowers the witness of believers to proclaim the gospel and strategically directs them in evangelism, it is thus an essential practice for believers engaged in evangelism to be led by the Holy Spirit. This means learning to listen for and anticipate the Spirit’s direction in everyday situations.

Prayer

One practical way for believers to actively listen for the Spirit’s direction is to pray evangelistically. Salvation belongs to God alone, and our most direct means of influence or participation with God is through prayer. Jesus directs the disciples to pray in Matthew 9, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."[50] Such a prayer recognizes that it is God’s work to send as it is to save, but it is still the role of sent believers and laborers to pray and intercede. This prayer is also a clear command to pray about evangelism and for evangelists.

Acts 4 provides a good example of praying for our ministry of evangelism. When Peter and John are released, they gather with the rest of the disciples to pray. Their main petition is in verse 29, “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to

[49] Acts 8:39.

[50] Matt 9:37-38.

speak your word with all boldness." Those practicing evangelism should pray for God's power in their ministry.

There are several examples in the Bible of persons praying evangelistically for others. Jesus prays for the forgiveness of others during his crucifixion, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[51] Jesus also prays for persons to believe at the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."[52] In Romans 10, Paul writes of his prayers for the salvation of the Jews, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved."[53] These examples demonstrate that evangelism or proclamation in the Bible happened alongside evangelistic prayers for the salvation of others.

In his classic work on evangelism, *Evangelism & The Sovereignty of God*, J. I. Packer begins and ends his case by appealing to prayer. "Thus the wheel of our argument comes full circle. We begin by appealing to our practice of prayer as proof of our faith in divine sovereignty. We end by applying our faith in divine sovereignty as a motive to the practice of prayer."[54] He instructs, "We should pray for those whom we seek to win, that the Holy Spirit will open their hearts; and we should pray for ourselves in our own witness, and for all who

[51] Luke 23:34.

[52] John 11:41-42.

[53] Rom 10:1.

[54] J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 125.

preach the gospel…"[55] This practical application fits squarely with the passages explored above which demonstrate prayer for the ministry of evangelism and for the salvation of others in the Bible.

Knowledge of the Gospel

To share the gospel, one must first have a confident understanding of the gospel. One concise summary of the gospel is from 1 Corinthains 15:

> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.[56]

Christ died for the forgiveness of sin in accordance with the Scriptures, was buried, and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. This is just one example of a concise summary of the gospel. These essential elements are assumed in every generic allusion to the "gospel" in Acts or the New Testament letters.

The need for being prepared to share this content is indicated in Peter's instruction of "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."[57] A natural progression from knowing and believing to sharing is indicated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 4: "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been

[55] Packer, *Evangelism*, 123.

[56] 1 Cor 15:1-4.

[57] 1 Pet 3:15.

written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also *believe*, and so we also *speak*, *knowing* that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence" (emphasis added).[58] Paul Barnett comments on these verses, "Thus 'knowing' issues in 'believing,' which is expressed in 'speaking.'"[59] We naturally tend to speak of what we believe and what we know, but we remain quiet about those things we are uncertain of.

The need to explicitly name "knowledge of the gospel" as a practice for evangelism reflects the poor state of the Church in America. In my own experience I have found that even long-time church attenders are not always confident in their ability to summarize the good news. This may be cause for pastoral concerns about one's experience of that gospel and thereby the status of their salvation. It is also a pastoral concern because the simple clarity of the gospel ought to be a great source of comfort and assurance to believers in the midst of trials. It is a comfort every believer ought to be secure in. Still, even someone with sufficient confidence in the gospel for these urgent purposes might struggle to feel equipped to share it with others. Sharing or teaching content to others always requires a different degree in confidence than simply understanding the content for oneself. For these reasons, it is helpful for churches and Christians to develop specific methods for learning and sharing the gospel.

[58] 2 Cor 4:13-14.

[59] Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1997), 239.

Relationship with Others

A Christian's relationship with God sends them into relationship with others. Jesus said to the disciples when he breathed the Holy Spirit onto them in the gospel of John, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."[60] There are several aspects to a Christian relationship with others that form context for evangelism.

Relationship Dynamics

Anytime a message is communicated between two or more persons, those persons are in relationship. The relationship may be distant as is the case when mass media is used, or the relationship may be intimate as is the case when the gospel is shared in the context of a friendship. As already detailed above, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is a very important theological grounds for the importance of relational intimacy in evangelism. In addition, the New Testament is full of examples of persons sharing the gospel with those close to them. Just one chapter in the gospel of John provides ample instances. Upon seeing the Spirit remain on Jesus, John the Baptist points Jesus out for two of his own disciples the next day, saying "Behold, the Lamb of God."[61] One of these two was Andrew. "The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah.'"[62] Also within in John 1, Philip immediately finds his cousin Nathaniel and invites him, "Come and see."[63] These

[60] John 20:21.

[61] John 1:36.

[62] John 1:41(NIV).

[63] John 1:44-47.

invitations are naturally offered in the context of intimate relationships. If one has no relationships in which to share the gospel, they can improve their context for evangelism by developing relationships with non-believers.

The New Testament also demonstrates that those practicing evangelism do so not only in relationship with non-believers, but in relationship with the visible body of believers. The context of the New Testament almost takes this for granted, but the context of North American culture necessitates this dynamic be made explicit. In the examples from John 1, the community of disciples is only getting started and each invitation is offered with reference to the others who are following Jesus. Andrew and Philip speak privately to their family members of what "we" have found. In Acts the testimony of the disciples is often given collectively. They are gathered together at Pentecost in Acts 2 and much is made of their fellowship afterward.[64] In Acts 3, Peter and John are paired up as they speak to onlookers while participating in miracles. In chapter 5, the emphasis is put on the apostles' joint testimony to the Sanhedrin. "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'"[65] It his helpful then to build redemptive relationships in a context that enables believers to readily identify with a visible community. Practicing evangelism in community with other believers also provides elements of discipleship and support for persons who are less comfortable in settings with non-believers or less secure in their faith. These are good reasons for the church to be

[64] Acts 2:41-47.

[65] Acts 5:29.

involved in helping members to form relationships with non-believers, as this project seeks to do.

Asking Questions and Listening

Listening and asking good questions is an important practice that contributes to evangelism in the New Testament. Even though Jesus is seen to have divine knowledge of the thoughts and intentions of men, he asked important questions during his ministry. Here I will point to just two, which stand out as evangelistic in nature. When Jesus noticed two disciples of John the Baptist following him around, he asks them, "What are you seeking."[66] These words, Jesus' first in the gospel of John, are more than a simple question about what they are doing.[67] Jesus also asks Mary at the tomb, "Woman, why are you weeping."[68] His question is a reiteration of the same question asked by the angels before him. Jesus knows why Mary is weeping. The question itself is meant to call Mary beyond her grief to accept the reality of Jesus' resurrection.[69]

In using his divine insight into the thoughts and conditions of others throughout his ministry, Jesus demonstrates the importance of listening. For example, when Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well, he demonstrates intimate knowledge of the woman's

[66] John 1:38.

[67] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 74.

[68] John 20:13.

[69] Köstenberger, *John*, 567.

condition as he offers her living water. This makes such an impact on the woman that when she shares of her encounter with Jesus in the village she summarizes, "Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"[70] As a Samaritan woman, isolated by her past from the village, drawing water outside of town in the heat of the day, it is significant that Jesus was "listening" enough to notice these things.

The disciples in Acts are also seen to make use of questions and listening in their evangelistic ministries. When the Holy Spirit directs Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch in chapter 8, he does not approach the chariot with simply a message to share, but begins the conversation, "Do you understand what you are reading?"[71] This opens the door for him to share the gospel in the context of what the eunuch is reading in Isaiah. When Peter is led to Cornelius, he explains why he came without objection, but does not immediately share about Jesus. He says, "So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."[72] Paul also, when he arrived in Athens demonstrates keen observation and listening before or while engaging in evangelism. When sharing in the Areopagus he says, "Men of Athens, I *perceive* that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and *observed* the objects of your worship, I *found* also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god'"(emphasis added).[73] In his perceiving, observing, and finding among the people of Athens, Paul is listening to the people in the context of his evangelism.

[70] John 4:29.

[71] Acts 8:30.

[72] Acts 10:29.

[73] Acts 17:22-23

Speaking about Jesus

Those who practice evangelism will be in the habit of regularly speaking about Jesus, thereby strengthening their context for evangelism. Just as with other elements above, this is taken for granted in the context of the early church but must be made explicit for 21st C. church in North America. God's instruction to the Israelites in Deuteronomy offers an example of how speaking of faith should be a regular part of everyday life.

> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.[74]

If we are talking of Jesus everyday amongst ourselves, then we will find it natural to speak of Jesus with non-believers. If we do not speak of Jesus or the gospel with our family of believers, then we are certainly not likely to practice evangelism.

Table Fellowship

There are several theological reasons for table fellowship to be given place as context for evangelism. The table of the showbread was an important item in the tabernacle. Significantly, the bread was not only offered to God for seven days, but was then to be eaten by the Aaron and his sons in the holy place.[75] This table and bread in the tabernacle imply fellowship with God and foreshadow the fellowship to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.[76] Indeed,

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[74] Deut 6:6-9.

[75] Lev 24:9.

[76] Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 206-210.

Jesus points to himself as the bread of life which brings lasting fellowship with God in John 6. Jesus feeds the 5,000 and points the crowd to himself as the bread of heaven. Partaking in that food is tied explicitly to fellowship with he and his father, “For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”[77] Likewise, in the Lord’s Supper Jesus institutes a shared meal at the center of the sacrament which unites us to Christ and the communion of the church. Also, in Luke 24, two of Jesus’ disciples welcome one whom they believe to be a stranger. In the context of sharing a meal with the stranger, they discover him to the risen Christ. Christine Pohl connects the importance of table fellowship in the Lord’s Supper to the importance of table fellowship in the Christian ministry of hospitality, which is meant to be extended to strangers. “A shared meal is the activity most closely tied to the reality of God’s Kingdom, just as it is the most basic expression of hospitality.”[78]

Jesus gives ample reason for extending table fellowship in Matthew 25 when he describes the judgment of the nations. “Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me…”[79] In the world of the first century there were no gift certificates to McDonald’s or soup kitchens to which “clients” could be referred. Giving food to

[77] John 6:55-56.

[78] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 30.

[79] Matt 25:34-36.

the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and welcoming the stranger naturally meant practicing hospitality in your home.

The dinner party in Luke 5 provides an excellent example of Jesus and his disciples having table fellowship with unbelievers. When Levi was called, he immediately hosted a banquet for Jesus in his home and invited a "large company of tax collectors."[80] When criticized by the Pharisees and scribes for eating with sinners, "Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"[81] Jesus' table fellowship with non-believers then was not viewed as compromising his witness or his own purity, but as an evangelistic endeavor in which he likely shared the good news of the kingdom of God, as he did everywhere else. The table fellowship became a context for evangelism.

Invitation

Extending invitations to step forward in the journey of faith is an important part of evangelism itself. Jesus extends a variety of invitations alongside the gospel in his ministry. The most basic invitation Jesus extends in the gospels is to "follow me."[82] It is clear this is an essential step of obedience to the call of the Christ, but it is also clear that the disciples who follow Jesus must also respond to other invitations. Another invitation commonly offered in

[80] Luke 5:29.

[81] Luke 5:31-32.

[82] Matt 4:19, 8:22, 9:9, 10:38, 19:21; Mark 1:17, 2:14, 8:34, 10:21; Luke 5:27, 9:23, 9:59, 9:61, 18:22; John 1:43, 10:27, 12:26, 13:36, 21:19 and 21:22.

Jesus' ministry is the call to "repent."[83] The apostles also extend this invitation often in the context of their evangelism.[84] Jesus also commonly invites people to "believe."[85] The gospel of John especially highlights the call to believe and demonstrates that even disciples who had previously followed, or repented, needed to be invited to believe. For example, Thomas and Mary who could be said to have followed and repented in response to Jesus' message, were each invited to "believe" after his resurrection. One could also add to the list of invitations all of Jesus' commands to "love" or "obey." These invitations demonstrate the need for believers to seek appropriate response while sharing the gospel.

In addition to these common invitations and responses in the gospels, Christians today might also recognize other critical steps on persons' faith journeys. A critical step in many persons' faith journey is to accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. This might be a step that comes before faith or repentance for some, and for others it may be a later step of maturity. One who is not ready to repent or believe may respond to an initial invitation simply to begin praying in Jesus' name. Yet another might claim to believe and have repented but needs to respond to the invitation to worship or obey by offering their service. Recognizing the variety of responses which the gospel demands and regularly extending such invitations strengthens the context in which we share the gospel.

[83] Matt 3:2, 4:17, 11:20; Mark 1:15, 6:12; Luke 5:32, 13:3, 13:5, 17:4 and 24:47.

[84] Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:22, 17:30, 20:21 and 26:20.

[85] Matt 9:28; Mark 1:15, 5:36, 9:23-24, 11:24, especially 16:16; Luke 8:12, 8:50; John 1:7, 1:50, 3:12, 3:16, 5:37-47, 6:29, 8:24, 9:35, 10:38, 11:15, 11:26, 12:36, 13:19, 14:1, 14:10-11, 19:35, 20:27 and 20:31.

Conclusion

In summary, the missio Dei provides a framework of redemption history that obliges all believers and churches to participate in relational evangelism. Understanding the church's mission and identity under the missio Dei compels us to pursue intimacy with those who are lost, seek to multiply through evangelism, and pursue redemptive relationships with unbelievers. The Bible demonstrates that believers can strengthen their evangelism and build context for it by developing their relationship with God. This involves being led by the Holy Spirit, praying evangelistically, and working out their understanding of the gospel. The Bible also demonstrates believers can strengthen their evangelism and its context by developing their relationship with others. Doing so involves building relationship dynamics, asking questions and listening, speaking regularly about Jesus, sharing in table fellowship with non-believers, and regularly extending invitations to take a step forward in the journey of faith. This thesis-project seeks specifically to strengthen engagement in evangelism by developing relationships between believers and non-believers.

CHAPTER THREE

MISSIONAL AND EVANGELISTIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Selection

This thesis-project uniquely seeks to affect participation in evangelism through developing relationships between the church and nonbelievers or non-churchgoers. However, this not the first effort in the church or academia that seeks to engage churches in evangelism or relationships in the community. Below I will review several relevant resources which are already available. The first resource represents one in a stream of literature available on the missional church movement. Reviewing missional church literature is important because the strong missional posture nourished in this movement is foundational to moving people toward engagement in evangelism. Since getting the congregation engaged in evangelism is the primary focus of this project, I will review several popular resources for evangelism. Aside from some books chosen for popularity, I have selected those with apparent focus on the role of relationships, community, and use in a congregational setting. Ultimately these reviews will demonstrate the necessity of this thesis-project's aim to increase the practice of evangelism among churches with a strong missional identity through building targeted relationships in community.

Introducing the Missional Church

Alan Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren offer an accessible presentation of the missional church in their book, *Introducing The Missional Church: What it is, Why it Matters, and How to*

Become One. This book and others in the missional church stream lay out a necessary path for churches to engage in the mission of God.[1] Below, I will outline some of the strengths and shortcomings of the book as they relate to this project and the church's struggle to engage in evangelism.

Roxburgh and Boren do solid work introducing the concept of missional church without reducing it to a simple strategy for church growth. They avoid even offering a definition of "missional church," for fear of placing the mission of God in a box, thereby limiting it. They describe the missional church as a way of being which is present more in the way Jesus explains the kingdom of God, through indirect parables, similes, metaphors and images. While avoiding an overly simple or reductionist definition, they are very clear about what missional church is not. Among other things, it is not about cross-cultural missions, being externally focused, a church growth strategy, a label for effective evangelism, returning to the early church, nor church renewal.[2] In place of offering a straightforward definition, Roxburgh and Boren invite readers into a "missional river," that represents the wanderings of God's people through mystery, memory, and mission.[3] Within this journey they propose three key conversations for churches to have as they seek to be missional: (1)reconsidering our context or mission-field,

[1] For other useful works on missional church see Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*, revised and updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013); Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, The Missional Network (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011); Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1998).

[2] Alan J. M. Roxburgh, Scott Boren, and Mark Priddy, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*, Allelon Missional Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 31-34.

[3] Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 39-45.

(2)rethinking the missio Dei or mission of God, and (3)reimagining church. These conversations invite churches to discover and participate in the mission of God in their own context.

The concepts of relationship and evangelism relevant to this project are mentioned by Roxburgh and Boren, but they fail to develop any connection between the two. While imagining the church as a sign, witness, and foretaste of God's kingdom, they propose missional practices of presence, love, and engagement in the neighborhood. These practices are very similar to David Fitch's disciplines in *Faithful Presence*, reviewed below, and encourage the kinds of relationships necessary for evangelism. However, they fail to connect these practices explicitly to evangelism. Their most direct comment on evangelism is in the context of what missional church is not.

> *Missional church* is not a label for churches that are effective at evangelism. While we don't want to diminish the importance of individuals choosing to trust Jesus as Lord, the common perspective of evangelism can lead people to misapply what it means to be missional. Missional churches do relate to non-Christians and invite them to enter the kingdom of God, but a reductionist view of salvation limited to a private, individualistic conversion falls far short of being missional.[4]

Roxburgh and Boren may be raising appropriate concerns about conflating missional church with evangelism, but in the absence of any positive description of evangelism itself or in relation to their idea of missional church, the reader is left with only suspicion about evangelism and questions about the authors' theology and soteriology.

In general, Roxburgh and Boren's introduction to missional church is weak on theology. Their chapter on theology is primarily about directing congregations to engage theology by studying what God is doing within their local context, not the Bible. They suggest reading

[4] Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church,* 32.

scripture through the lens of a local context, rather than seeking to apply any scriptural principles as boilerplate solutions in all settings. This is a well-intentioned and reasonable idea, but the undeveloped biblical theology by Roxburgh and Boren contributes to their shortcomings in application. In failing to identify biblical principles as a matter of first importance, they miss the necessity and role of proclamation or evangelism in God's mission.[5]

Summarily, Roxburgh and Boren fail to address the biggest problem stated in their introduction: a generation in need of the gospel. Their introduction shares the oft told story of Leslie Newbigin's return to England in 1974 after serving as a missionary in India for more than 30 years. Upon return he was shocked to discover the hopelessness of a generation in need of the gospel and the complacency of the church. Roxburgh and Boren lay out a necessary path to reengaging the church with God's passionate mission, but they fail to call the missional church to evangelism. Their application runs the risk of allowing churches to mistake the end goal of the missional church journey as simply changing the congregation, while neglecting to engage in the evangelism necessary to change the world. This is like an arrow that has been carefully aimed and shot to hit its target, only to bounce off because it has no tip. Roxburgh and Boren's missional church effectively gets the arrow to the target of local community, but without evangelism the message is not likely to have the impact they desire. This tends to be a flaw of the missional church movement in general and echoes the need for this thesis-project's primary focus of developing missional relationships *for the sake of evangelism*.

[5] For a more thorough presentation of the theology behind missional church see Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013); and *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

Evangelism Literature

The Complete Evangelism Guidebook

The Complete Evangelism Guidebook, edited by Scott Dawon, offers a comprehensive collection of articles by popular evangelical figures. I chose to include this resource because most of the popular resources skewed primarily toward theory of evangelism or primarily toward the practice of evangelism. This resource offers a much more comprehensive treatment, even if limited in its depth. Also, it's variety of contributing authors reflects the wider culture of evangelism and approaches in the American church today. In addition to himself, Dawson's collection includes contributions from recognized authors and evangelists such as Josh McDowell, Greg Steir, Luis Palao, Joni Eareckson Tada, Rick Warren, George Barna, Lon Allison, Thom S. Rainer, Steve Sjogren, and many more. It is organized into two parts. Part 1 explores defining, demonstrating, declaring, and defending one's faith. Part 2 explores a wide variety of people groups one might seek to evangelize.

Dawson's guidebook has several overall strengths as a resource for those interested in beginning to share their faith. Its greatest strength is the balance it offers in approaching evangelism as proclamation of the gospel, without neglecting the context of faith in practice. Where many resources conflate evangelism with good works or isolate the proclamation of evangelism from the life of faith, Dawson's collection offers a healthy balance. For example, Part 1 covers some important matters such as the disciplines of prayer, personal growth (or sanctification), developing one's testimony and ability to clearly communicate the gospel. Part 1 also addresses the role of servanthood as an explicit companion to evangelism. There is even some healthy attention given to the spiritual battles of faith and evangelism.

The role and importance of relationships are highlighted throughout the guidebook by many contributing authors. Dawon's introduction refers to a survey he conducted of more than 6,000 Christians from 16 states, on the topic of why they have a hard time sharing their faith. The third most popular reason offered had to do with risk of losing a friendship. Dawson offers a compelling rebuttal to this fear and makes the case that evangelism amongst friends honors the nature of friendship itself and is a matter of obedience to God's commands.

In a preliminary section of articles on demonstrating faith, Steve Sjogren writes about servant evangelism. This section could have been an ideal place to address the foundation of intentionally building redemptive relationships which would be applied in the latter section of the guidebook. The acts of kindness and service mentioned in his article are adequate for demonstrating faith in a practical way but fall disappointingly short of pointing people toward developing genuine relationships with an aim toward sharing the gospel message. Sjogren offers his own church, the Vineyard Community Church in Cincinnati, as an example of servant evangelism. His church of "seed flingers" spreads kindness by paying for the meals of people behind them at drive through restaurants. They ask the cashier to pass along a small business card explaining the act as a demonstration of God's love and inviting them to church. His congregation distributes more than 200,000 of these cards every year.[6] This example is a positive demonstration of Christian generosity but does not foster personal relationships between the people of the church and their community.

[6] Steve Sjorgen, "Extraordinary Lifestyle: Servant Evangelism- Using God's Kindness to Reach the Human Heart," in *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook: Expert Advice on Reaching Others for Christ*, editor Scott Dawon, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 44.

While Dawson's guidebook misses the opportunity to lay relationships as a building block for evangelism in general, relationships are nonetheless assumed by the structure of the book itself and mentioned explicitly by many contributing authors as important for reaching their targeted people groups. Part 2 of the guidebook is organized around strategies or approaches to particular people groups. There is a section on reaching family, friends, co-workers, etc. Likewise, there are sections on reaching persons according to religion, race, age, profession, and other categories. The assumption is that a reader might identify existing relationships within these areas and read about how they might approach sharing faith with these persons. Many of these contributing authors explicitly mention building relationships as important to approaching their targeted people groups. Abraham Sarker instructs those evangelizing Muslims to develop friendships. "Muslims are hospitable people, and they will respond if you extend the same friendship to them. After you have developed a friendship, listen for and be sensitive to the spiritual and physical needs of your Muslim friends."[7] Regi Campbell identifies relationship building as essential not only to reaching his targeted people group of businesspersons, but to evangelism itself. "Jesus was emphatic that relationships were at the center of what he called us to do…When we go and build relationships, we've actually begun to go and make disciples."[8] These are just two examples of many which explicitly mention the importance of relationship in reaching a particular people group.

[7] Abraham Sarker, "Islam: What Causes Muslims to Turn to Christ," in Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, 240.

[8] Regi Campbell, "Business: Taking your Faith to Work," in Dawson, *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook,* 174.

The fatal flaw of this resource is its failure to address the church as a community. It is geared almost exclusively towards individuals who are personally seeking to engage in evangelism. There is little mention of evangelists belonging to a church and no explicit mention of bringing converts or those evangelized into the life of a local church. Where Coleman's *Master Plan of Evangelism*, reviewed below, conflates discipleship and evangelism, Dawson's guidebook leaves the call for discipleship and Christian community completely out. Ultimately this resource points to the need for this thesis-project to provide the church community itself with opportunity to develop relationships which can form a strong context for evangelism.

Out of the Saltshaker

Another popular book on evangelism of the last 40 years is Rebecca Manley Pippert's *Out of the Saltshaker & Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*. Pippert's is one in a stream of other books on evangelism geared toward individuals aiming to engage in evangelism.[9] She provides a solid overall treatment of evangelism without allowing it to become an academic exercise. The book is full of stories and relatable experiences that help one to imagine evangelism as a part of daily life. Pippert acknowledges the broader context of faithful witness in evangelism but retains a primary focus on verbal proclamation. This is explored through three stages of communication: cultivating, planting, and reaping.

[9] For more resources geared to individual evangelism see David Geisler and Norman L. Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism*: Connecting with People to Share Jesus (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Pub, 2014); and R. York Moore, *Growing Your Faith by Giving It Away: Telling the Gospel Story with Grace and Passion* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

Pippert emphasizes the role of relationship throughout the book. She finds the reason for this emphasis in God's relationship with humanity and the gift of relationship that he gave Adam. "In Genesis we see that God sought relationship with us. Then he gave Adam a mate because 'it is not good that the man should be alone' (Gen 2:18)."[10] She also grounds the importance of relationship in the call to be holy. "Holiness, from God's perspective, is intimately connected to how we treat people. Holiness is rooted in relationship."[11] She also mentions the importance of relationship in the church's witness of community.

When it comes to her treatment of relationships as context for evangelism, the reader may be disappointed to find that almost all of her many stories of personal sharing take place in transitory settings like airports, bus terminals, and event venues. However, she does clearly state the importance of evangelism in everyday relationships in a section near the end about evangelism within the church. "By far the most effective, the most costly and even perhaps the most biblical kind of evangelism is found in the person or groups who look at the people around them, those with whom their own life naturally intersects, and then begin to cultivate friendships and to love them."[12] She also acknowledges the ease of which she shares with strangers herself and that "we should expect that it will take a little longer to develop trust with those with whom we live and work."[13]

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[10] Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker & into the World: Evangelism As a Way of Life*, 20th anniversary rev. & expanded ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 57.

[11] Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker*, 75.

[12] Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker,* 240.

[13] Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker,* 183.

Overall, Pippert's book is a useful resource for individuals pursuant of evangelism, but like Dawson she fails to integrate the evangelist into the life of a local church. Readers who do not travel for a living will struggle to identify what "evangelism as a way of life," mentioned in her title, actually looks like. What will it take to develop relationships in one's own community, and to share the gospel in those relationships as one that belongs to the community of a local church? These questions necessitate this project's aim to assist church members in developing substantive relationships within which to practice evangelism.

The Master Plan of Evangelism

Robert E. Coleman's *The Master Plan of Evangelism* is one of the most widely distributed books on evangelism used in America, with over 3.5 million copies sold, and thus warrants some consideration. Coleman distills eight guiding principles from Jesus' earthly ministry and applies them broadly to ministers and evangelists today. The strength of this book is its refreshing practicality. After making his case from biblical example in each chapter, he applies each principle to the church. Many of these applications include warranted exhortation of the church and leadership. For example, he calls for greater obedience to the commands of Christ, developing leaders and expecting more from them.

Several times throughout his book, Coleman's principles touch directly or indirectly on the role of relationships. His second principle, association, makes clear reference to the importance of relationship. Coleman writes, "Having called his men, Jesus made a practice of being with them. This was the essence of his training program—just letting his disciples follow

him."[14] Likewise, "Knowledge was not communicated by the Master in terms of laws and dogmas, but in the living personality of One who walked among them."[15] Presence and relationship is also mentioned explicitly in a later chapter when he emphasizes the need for presence in supervision of those being trained for evangelism.[16] Almost all references to relationship in his book have to do with a teacher's relationship to disciples. The closest he gets to mentioning the role of relationship in proclamation is in his exhortation for personal follow-up and one-on-one discipleship after conversion.

Overall, Coleman's contribution in *The Master Plan of Evangelism* is geared mostly toward those training and overseeing evangelists and assumes too much about the practice of evangelism itself to be a comprehensive resource for churches today. He fails to clearly define or distinguish evangelism from discipleship, and thus conflates the two almost entirely. It is easy to see the connection between this and another popular resource by Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*.[17] Admittedly, discipleship should involve evangelism and evangelism must involve discipleship. However, in dealing so limitedly with evangelism itself, Coleman leaves the reader making too many assumptions about what exactly the practice of evangelism is or looks like. It is this same lack of clarity that warrants the need for my thesis-project in a missional church that has wrongly mistaken discipleship for evangelism or assumed evangelism to be taking place in its discipleship.

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[14] Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2006), 37.

[15] Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism,* 38.

[16] Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism,* 97-98.

[17] Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, Spire ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: F.H. Revell, 1998).

Ancient-Future Evangelism

In *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*, Robert E. Webber finds inspiration in the early church's evangelistic success as a model for evangelism today. His reason for looking to the early church is not just about getting back to the way things were, it is also prompted by common contexts such as religious pluralism, antagonism toward Christian faith, and widespread interest in spirituality.

The overall greatest strength of *Ancient Future Evangelism* is the central role given to relationship and community. Webber suggests two general marks of evangelism in a postmodern and post-Christian context. Firstly, evangelism is driven by reaching out. He describes forming relationships in neighborhoods through social networks and sharing meals in people's homes. Secondly, evangelism in the postmodern and post-Christian world is driven by belonging and community. He states how the church of modernity did evangelism through direct verbal proclamation. "The missional church, on the other hand, evangelizes primarily by *immersing the unchurched in the experience of community*."[18] As seen below, Webber ultimately takes this emphasis on relationship too far in that he removes the element of direct verbal proclamation. Also, according to Webber, neighborhood churches should be especially effective in evangelism.[19] Ironically, my experience has been just the opposite. Persons in small churches and smaller communities tend to be less likely to engage in evangelism, especially in their own neighborhoods. There are likely various reasons for this.

[18] Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*, Ancient-Future Faith Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 62.

[19] Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism,* 57-60.

Similar to Coleman in *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Webber's aim is to bring discipleship to evangelism. He writes in response to a problem identified in a 1999 meeting of the International Consultation on Discipleship (ICD), "that many evangelical churches have been successful in converting people but unsuccessful in forming Christians into disciples."[20] I question the assumption that evangelical churches have been widely successful in converting people in the 1990's or now. Webber, and perhaps the ICD, seem to conflate church growth with evangelism and conversion. In *The Art of Evangelism*, reviewed below, William J. Abraham identifies this as one of three popular misunderstandings of evangelism today.[21] As a result of this focus, Webber clearly defines and outlines an approach to discipleship, but is less pointed in his treatment of evangelism itself, as distinguished from discipleship. The closest thing to a definition comes out in his summarized approach to evangelism.

> 1. A relationship is established between a Christian and a non-Christian.
> 2. The interested non-Christian is invited to attend a neighborhood community fellowship where Christians gather to eat, socialize, and discuss spiritual issues.
> 3. The interested person is brought to the church where the gospel is embodied in community and rehearsed in worship.
> 4. Genuine conversion is characterized by believing, behaving, and belonging.
> 5. Conversion is a start, not an end.[22]

In this approach, there is no explicit mention of proclamation or communication of the gospel.

In the rest of his book, the message itself is clearly defined, but the only place he deals explicitly with its verbal proclamation is in the context of worship. In his model, it is presumed that after relationship and community are established, the content of Christian faith will be

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[20] Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism,* 13 and 43.

[21] William J Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism: Evangelism Carefully Crafted into the Life of the Local Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988), 28-29.

[22] Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism,* 67.

shared in worship. Webber is right to identify the role of community in evangelism, but this model fails to distinguish evangelism from outreach. Steps 1-3 in his model are more rightly described as outreach. They are important things every Christian and church should be doing, but they do not constitute evangelism. Limiting evangelistic proclamation to the context of corporate worship has practical consequences when we consider what it means for evangelism to fail or for someone to reject the gospel. If someone fails to accept the invitation to worship where the gospel is "embodied" and presumably proclaimed as in Webber's model, does this mean that the responsibility for evangelism is complete? Even if Webber believes the ideal place to share the gospel is within worship, shouldn't the world be given a chance to reject the gospel and not just an invitation to church? Webber's shortcomings here point to the need for this thesis-project to go beyond simply forming significant relationships in community as an end to itself, and to measure direct proclamation of the gospel as a critical part of evangelism.

The Art of Evangelism

William J. Abraham's *The Art of Evangelism: Evangelism Carefully Crafted into the Life of the Local Church* is packed with practical insight for how local congregations ought to approach evangelism. This somewhat brief work is meant to summarize and apply Abraham's more comprehensive and well-known book, *The Logic of Evangelism*.[23] Although *The Art of Evangelism* is written specifically with the Methodist church in mind, it deserves treatment here because it distills and applies for the local church a sound approach to evangelism that has been absent in many of the resources above.

[23] William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

One of Abraham's great contributions is dealing explicitly with the diverse definitions and assumptions about evangelism today. He identifies strengths and weaknesses of three popular models: evangelism as witness, as proclamation, and as church growth.[24] Those who hold to the model of witness might label anything done out of commitment to Jesus as evangelism. Those who hold to the model of proclamation only count a clear verbal presentation of the gospel as evangelism. Those who hold to the model of church growth might count anything that builds and grows a local church as evangelism. Abraham suggests a fourth model. "Evangelism is best construed as that set of actions which are governed by the intention to initiate people into the kingdom of God."[25]

Abraham gives appropriate attention to the necessity of proclamation in evangelism without neglecting discipleship or the church's broader witness. Where Coleman and Webber allow their concern for discipleship to keep them from ever really developing the distinctives of evangelism, effectively conflating the two, Abraham keeps the stated subject of evangelism central. While expressing just as much concern for discipleship, he develops the nature of response and conversion as a way of building a foundation for discipleship. Abraham suggests six dimensions of entry into the kingdom of God, or conversion: they are moral, experiential, theological, horizontal, operational, and disciplinary (METHOD).[26] Webber offers similar marks of discipleship but fails to connect them to conversion and evangelism.

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[24] Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism,* 24-31.

[25] Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism*¸ 33.

[26] Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism*¸ 62.

Although Abraham does not limit evangelism to proclamation, he maintains its necessity and gives it ample attention. The fourth chapter lays out a comprehensive approach for churches to use for evangelism. There he touches on the importance of relationship and personal sharing.

> The vast majority of people are won to the kingdom of God through contact with Christians who have shared the faith with them by word and deed. Spreading the gospel through networks of relationships and friendship is central to evangelism. It is absolutely essential, therefore, that Christians find a way to share their faith with others on a regular basis.[27]

In addition to the straightforward instruction for individuals sharing in friendship, he addresses the need for consistent evangelistic sermons, the use of various forms of media, and encourages strategic initiatives similar to revivals of the past. Overall, this treatment of evangelism, proclamation, and discipleship is refreshingly balanced and useful for the church today.

Despite these strengths, Abraham's definition of evangelism succumbs to the same weaknesses he assigns to the approach of evangelism as witness. He rightly critiques evangelism as witness because it includes everything done "out of commitment to Jesus Christ."[28] Likewise, "If everything we do is an act of witness, and every act of witness is evangelism, then everything we do is evangelism."[29] Meanwhile, his own definition, noted above, makes the same mistake by resting entirely on the "intention" of those same acts. This definition could stand if "intention" is finally demonstrated in the act of verbal proclamation,

[27] Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism,* 56.

[28] Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism,* 24.

[29] Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism,* 25.

but doing good deeds with the will or hope of someone joining the kingdom is no more evangelism than an act of witness. Ultimately, Abraham underestimates how easily people excuse themselves from the proclamation essential to evangelism. He is right to apply the intent of initiating people into the kingdom to tasks and ministries which Christians often miss, but mere intent does not constitute evangelism. Thus Abraham, as others, demonstrates the need for this project to implement an approach to evangelism that develops sufficient context, without neglecting the essential act of proclamation.

Evangelism in Missional Church: Faithful Presence

The most helpful resource I found addressing relationship and evangelism is David Fitch's *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission*. Because Fitch offers an intersection of missional church, evangelism and the context of a local church, I will deal with his book in more depth than those above. Below I will review its greatest contributions, shortcomings, and how Fitch's framework for evangelism compares to that of this project.

Fitch aptly points out the theme of God's presence in redemption history as cause for the church's ministry of presence. His summary of redemption history reaches essentially the same conclusion as Chapter 2 of this project, "The Scriptures, from beginning to end, tell the marvelous story of God returning his presence to all creation. It always was God's intent to be *with* his creation in the fullness of his presence."[30] He goes on to appropriately identify the

[30] David E. Fitch, *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines That Shape the Church for Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 24.

church's participation in this. "How does God restore his presence over the whole earth? And what do we have to do with it? The Bible's answer to this question is the church."[31]

In Fitch's Appendix 3 he attempts to clarify his theology for the church's participation in God's presence using two concepts familiar to the missional church movement: missio Dei and incarnation. He asserts that both these concepts have been misapplied in churches. Fitch contends the missio Dei has rightly taken the limits off God's mission and it is not limited to his church but is present in all the world. The problem, according to Fitch, is that the church has failed to discern where or how to be involved in that mission. Likewise, he points out that emphasis on incarnation has produced Christians living incarnationally but that the same emphasis often prevents them from organizing or gathering in any meaningful way. Fitch proposes witness then, or faithful presence, as the sum of applying missio Dei plus the incarnation.[32]

Fitch's theology of God's presence and the church's participation in God's mission is very helpful. Ultimately this understanding produces the same call to action as my own project, but Fitch seems to miss the obvious, that the incarnational presence of God in Christ is itself a manifestation of the missio Dei. Thus, I argue the church's incarnational ministry is likewise a participation in the greater missio Dei. This clarification alleviates the misapplications Fitch calls out in his Appendix 3 and resolves some of the tension present in his introductory chapters about the relevance of the particularized church for this mission. Full participation in the missio Dei necessitates incarnational ministry.

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[31] Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 26.

[32] Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 202.

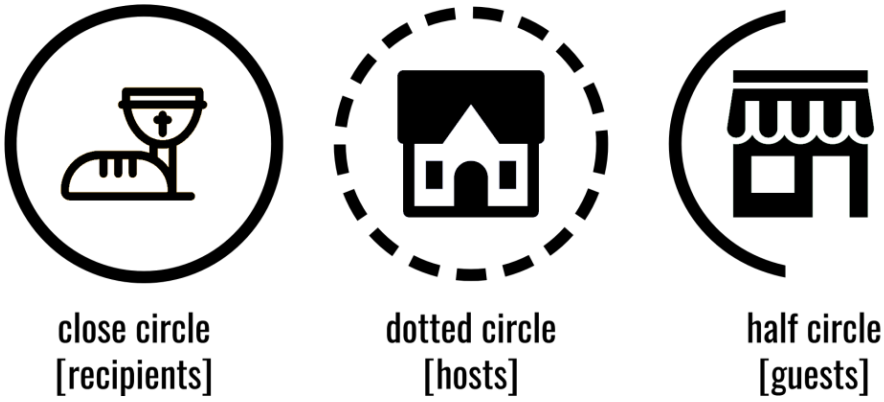
Fitch presents seven disciplines as core practices for the church's witness or faithful presence in the world. The disciplines are the Lord's Table, reconciliation, proclaiming the gospel, being with "the least of these," being with children, the fivefold ministry, and kingdom prayer. Fitch writes that these disciplines "shape us into his presence," and even calls them "social sacraments."[33]

To resolve the tension between God's unique presence in the church and the greater missio Dei at work in the world, Fitch describes three circles in which each of the disciplines are continually practiced. The three circles keep the "disciplines on the move."[34] The first circle is the "close" circle, where committed Christians practice the disciplines together and mutually submit to the reign of Christ. The second circle is dotted, where the Christian serves as host or initiates a gathering in which a discipline will be practiced, but this is done in a space where neighbors or strangers are invited to observe or participate in what God is doing. The third circle is a half circle, where the Christian practices the disciplines as a guest or stranger, extending the presence of God for others to welcome or reject. See Figure 1 below.

[33] Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 35-36.

[34] Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 40.

FIGURE 1. *Fitch's Three Circles.*



As an example, I will summarize Fitch's application of the Lord's Table in the three circles. The Lord's Table practiced in "close" is what most traditions would identify as the traditional sacrament of the Lord's Supper or communion. It is traditionally observed in the context of Sunday morning worship. The Lord's Supper in the dotted circle might involve a Christian host who invites Christian friends to experience the hospitality of Christ's presence by sharing a meal in their home or a local restaurant. Neighbors and other potential seekers are also invited to participate and may or may not also discern the presence of Christ. The Lord's Supper in the half circle involves Christians going as guests into others' homes or public spaces and discerning the presence of Christ in those secular settings. In these spaces the opportunity may present for the Christian to point out or proclaim Christ's presence for others to welcome or reject.

There are many great strengths and one critical flaw to Fitch's overall framework of these seven disciplines and three circles. While Fitch's book was not an inspiration for the concepts of this thesis-project, it is affirming to me that there is so much overlap in his theology

and disciplines with those of my project. I appreciated the centrality of God's missional presence as impetus for a ministry of faithful presence. His first discipline of the Lord's Table, practiced first in the "close" circle, included a helpful emphasis on the relationship and discernment of Christians with Christ first, before being sent to the world. This emphasis is very similar to my own understanding of relationship with God as a priority in forming healthy context for evangelism.

Fitch's application of proclaiming the gospel in the dotted and half circles exemplify the practice of evangelism. I especially liked the concept of proclaiming the gospel in the dotted circle, amongst a gathering of believers, but where neighbors and guests are included. This is similar to what my project is trying to accomplish by building relationships and engaging in evangelism while serving together as a church community, rather than just as individuals on their own, who represent a church community. Proclamation in the dotted circle provides strong relational context for evangelism and communicates to hearers that receiving the gospel involves belonging to a community. I appreciated his suggestion of proclaiming Christ's presence in the world and in the lives of others with invitation and using strong words such as "we proclaim" or "we declare" in doing so.[35] Likewise, his mention of "multiple entry points" and invitations to various steps "forward in faith" are very much in line with a series of sermons preached in conjunction with my project titled "Journeys of Faith in the Gospel of John."[36] This sermon series will be explained further in Chapter 4.

[35] Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 103.

[36] Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 105.

There are two critical flaws in Fitch's framework. The first is that Fitch seems to present these disciplines as a comprehensive understanding of what the church is and does. His introduction is rightly critical of a church that is static in maintaining Sunday worship as irrelevant to the world. However, no comprehensive framework for what it is to be the church can stand without corporate worship. Fitch presents faithful presence as synonymous with witness, but a biblical look at the church's witness is incomplete without the worship of Christ as Lord. Arguably, Fitch could have included worship as an eighth discipline and it might have stood. The witness of worship or praise could be easily applied in the three circles and could provide a helpful distinction between the church being the presence of Christ, versus the church pointing to the presence of Christ. As they are, Fitch's disciplines would be stronger if understood narrowly as context for mission or evangelism. Such an understanding would be very similar to that developed in this project. In fairness, this project also assumes the practice of corporate worship, but the practices are not presented as comprehensive to the church itself. For example, it also assumes personal devotion and Bible reading.

A second major flaw in Fitch's framework has to do with evangelism in relation to the other disciplines. He argues that each of the seven disciplines shapes us into the presence of Christ. For example, the disciplines of being with the least of these, or with children, in the dotted and half circles are understood to shape believers and the world into Christ's presence. The world may be impacted for the better by these disciplines, but that impact can hardly be considered transformation into Christ's presence without the proclamation of good news and conversion. There needs to be verbal proclamation alongside the disciplines in all three circles in order for people to get the message. In the dotted and half circles it should be obvious that

onlookers will not discern the presence of Christ unless it is verbally announced. "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?"[37] Therefore, evangelism or proclamation must be a discipline practiced alongside all the other disciplines, not simply counted as one among other good deeds. Fitch would probably allow for or even encourage this personally, but it is not explicit in his book. These shortcomings and oversights are indicative of the greater need for this project to keep evangelism as proclamation central in the development of missional relationships.

A Bigger Conversation

The sample of authors above represent the broader missional church and evangelism literature commonly used in American evangelical churches today. These authors and streams of literature generally identify the same problem, that the church in America has not been very effective in fulfilling the core charge of the Great Commission, to make disciples.

In addition to broad agreement on the problem, there is widespread agreement that both relationships and evangelism are necessary components to the church's mission. As demonstrated above, each of these resources highlight directly or indirectly the importance of relationships. While evangelism is not the explicit focus of all these resources, it is safe to assert that each of these authors would agree evangelism is a critical part of making disciples. However, there is considerable confusion over the role evangelism or relationships should play while pursuing a solution to the church's shortcomings in making disciples.

[37] Rom 10:14.

Several authors above focus on affecting changes in the church itself in order to be more effective in the Great Commission. The missional church movement, represented by Roxburgh, Boren, and Fitch, would generally fall into this category. As noted above, Roxburgh and Boren especially, focus so much on the church's transformation that they run the risk of replacing the goal of making disciples with church's organizational journey. Likewise, their "missional practices" and Fitch's "disciplines," are generally aimed at remedying the church's culture. Webber's *Ancient Future Evangelism* is also generally aimed at the church itself, promoting a faith forming community. His emphasis is less on strategies of proclaiming the gospel and more on forming a culture of hospitality in the community of faith. Although Roxburgh and Boren go out of their way to distinguish themselves from Webber and others who seek to return to church practices of the first century, they inadvertently reach very similar conclusions and develop similar practices. Webber even gives considerable attention to Fitch in his chapter on evangelism.[38] Each of these authors share the same mistake, they assume that missional culture will naturally produce evangelism. While in theory this ought to be true, they miss the plain fact that so many missional churches and churches modeled after ancient practices are still not engaging regularly in evangelism.

Other authors aim at affecting obedience to the Great Commission through focus on the church's model of evangelism. There are at least two identifiable approaches within the authors above who are focused on evangelism. Dawson and Pippert hold in common an approach geared toward individuals. They aim to motivate and equip individuals to engage in personal evangelism.

[38] Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 58-59 and 62-63.

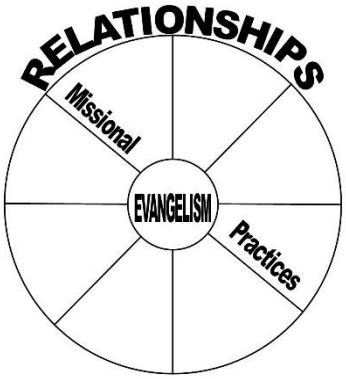
Alternatively, Coleman and Webber's approach to evangelism is geared toward discipleship. This is clearly demonstrated above regarding Coleman's *Master Plan of Evangelism*. Although Webber is focused on practically affecting the church community, his approach is like Coleman's in that he is explicitly presenting his model as one for "evangelism." Both Coleman and Webber's approaches are in reaction against a hyper-individualized or strictly decision focused model of evangelism. They would likely identify Dawon and Pippert as proponents of the approach they oppose. Fitch, Roxburgh and Boren, representing the missional church, also set themselves against this model of evangelism.

In the resources reviewed above, there is no agreed upon definition for evangelism. Pippert, Dawson, and Abraham generally promote a straightforward understanding of evangelism focused on proclamation. Roxburgh, Boren, and to a lesser degree Fitch, could be characterized as promoting the practices and disciplines of the missional church movement as an alternative to evangelism. While they would concede the need for evangelism, they fail to define it and intentionally choose to focus elsewhere. Webber and Coleman seem to understand evangelism as discipleship. This ambiguity and confusion is a significant problem for the church's aim to make new disciples.

As noted in Chapter 1, this project will proceed with a narrow definition of evangelism as the proclamation of the gospel. The eight practices, also named in Chapter 1, are very similar to the practices and disciplines named in the missional church literature above. However, in the context of this project they are understood specifically as a context for evangelism, instead of alternatives to evangelism. In this way evangelism relates to the practices and relationships in much the way Christipher J. H. Wright describes "integral mission," as noted in Chapter 2. He

describes evangelism as the central hub of a wheel and the outer rim as Christian engagement.[39] Taking Wright's illustration a step further, I imagine evangelism as the hub, the eight practices as the spokes, and relationships as the rim. See Figure 2 below.

FIGURE 2. *The Wheel of Evangelism.*



Even with all these components theoretically understood, it remains to be demonstrated if this wheel can turn. Can a church with strong a missional identity, and a clear understanding of evangelism increase its engagement in evangelism by forming substantive relationships in a target community? In Chapter 4 I turn to this task in describing the implementation of this project.

[39] Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 277-278.

CHAPTER FOUR

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND EQUIPPING FOR EVANGELISM

What's the Goal?

This thesis-project attempts to test the hypothesis that in a congregation with an already healthy missional identity, engagement in evangelism can be improved by developing relationships between the congregation and a specifically targeted part of the community**.** It has already been demonstrated in Chapter 1, using the Missional Posture Assessment developed by Dr. Ken Priddy of the GO Center, that the Calvin Presbyterian Church has a clear "pro-missional" posture. Below, I will describe how I measured the congregation's engagement in evangelism, how I sought to build relationships between the congregation and its targeted subgroups of seniors and students in the community, and how I tried to equip the congregation with a biblical understanding of evangelism alongside these efforts.

Measuring Engagement in Evangelism

The lack of a common definition and understanding for evangelism in the contemporary church proved to be an impediment once again in the search for a reputable tool measuring engagement in evangelism. Since I was unable to find a credible existing tool that shared my project's understanding of evangelism, I chose to develop my own "Anonymous Questionnaire."[1] The questionnaire was administered first before the programs and efforts of the project began and again six months after the start. Before presenting the results of the first

[1] See Appendix C.

data set collected, I will describe the rationale behind the questionnaire more fully. The results of the second data set and comparison with the first will be covered in Chapter 5.

Developing an Anonymous Questionnaire

As noted in Chapter 1, the questionnaire consists of 18 statements asking for a level of agreement on a scale of 1-5, from "Strongly Agee" to "Strongly Disagree." Below I will describe some of the statements and how they are intended to test the project's hypothesis. They will be covered in order of their categories of intent, and not the order they appear in the questionnaire. Their number in the questionnaire will be listed.

Statement 11 is the questionnaire's most straightforward effort to gauge direct engagement in evangelism. "11. Within the last 6 months, I have shared the content of the gospel with a non-churchgoer." Sharing the gospel with a non-churchgoer fits the straightforward definition of evangelism used in this project. The most ideal results would indicate an overall stronger agreement with this statement in the second questionnaire than in the first.

There are a total of five statements aimed at the practice of developing relationships. This is more than any other category; most are addressed with just one or two statements.

3. *Within the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way to bless or serve a non-churchgoer.*
15. *In the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way at least once to make or strengthen a relational connection with a non-churchgoer, in hope of sharing the gospel with them in the future.*
16. *In the last 6 months, I have formed at least 1 positive relationship with a student.*
17. *In the last 6 months, I have formed at least 1 positive relationship with a resident of Crescent Place or Schill Manor*.

10. *Within the last 2 months, I have participated in ministry opportunities through my church that can help me form relationships with non-churchgoers and or non-believers*.[2]

There are more statements on this practice than the others because relationships are at the center of my hypothesis. Statements 3 and 15 are meant to gauge overall participation in the specific practice of relationship building. Statements 16, 17 and 10 are more specifically meant to be used as diagnostic indicators of participation in the programs initiated during for the project. If there is not increased agreement with these statements in the second questionnaire, then I should not expect to see an increase in evangelism.

Most the rest of the statements are intended to identify participation in key behaviors associated with the eight practices which form the context for evangelism. There is at least one statement aimed at each practice. For example, the following statement pertains to the practice of understanding the gospel. "4. If asked, I can summarize the main points of the gospel in less than 2-3 minutes." One's level of agreement with this statement reveals their practical ability to share the gospel. Further, in the absence of increased agreement with the statement on actually sharing the gospel, then an increase in agreement to this statement could at least indicate an increased *readiness* to engage in evangelism.

In addition to the categories above, there are three other diagnostic statements in the questionnaire.

1. *I believe that God desires all believers to share their faith and invite others to faith in Jesus*.
7. *There are opportunities to serve with my church that can help me form relationships in my community.*

[2] See Appendix C.

18. *Within the past year, I have served on the Calvin Presbyterian Church's Session, Board of Deacons, or Vision Team.*[3]

Statement 1 is meant to uncover a critical conviction necessary for one to engage in evangelism that was notably absent from the Missional Posture Assessment. If there is significant disagreement with this statement, it would indicate a need not just for relationships but education or discipleship. Likewise, if there is no marked improvement in the number of persons engaged in evangelism, then increased agreement with this statement may be used to indicate increased *readiness* to engage in evangelism. Statement 7 is meant to measure awareness of the programs taking place in the church throughout the project. If persons are not aware of the opportunities, their participation in them or practice of developing relationships would be less directly relevant to the results. Statement 18 is the last diagnostic question. If there is little engagement or awareness from the rest of the congregation, my hope would be to at least see progress among those who are leaders in the congregation.

Administering the First Anonymous Questionnaire

The questionnaire was first administered at the end of May 2021, two months before the first key programs designed to develop relationships began. It was administered both digitally and via paper. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to all "active participants" in the congregation. Paper copies were mailed with return envelopes to those who do not communicate via e-mail and anyone who requested them. Paper copies were also present in the back of the sanctuary on Sunday mornings for several weeks. I chose to limit the

[3] See Appendix C.

questionnaire to active participants because the evangelistic engagement of shut-ins and inactive members could not be affected by ministries or efforts they were not exposed to or would not have opportunity to participate in. Likewise, there are several active participants in the congregation who are not formally members and might otherwise be left out if it was given to "members." On the same principle, if it was simply made available to all, some active participants might have self-selected out of responding on the assumption that the questionnaire was only intended for members. It was admittedly difficult to define "active participants" in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, so I tried to be generous in my estimation of whether or not persons were engaging online. Generally, if someone was active in the church before the pandemic, and I hoped they might later be active during the ministries relevant to the project, then they received a questionnaire even if I had not seen them recently. I received 33 responses to the first questionnaire, most of them on paper.[4] The membership of Calvin Presbyterian Church at the time was 92, and average in-person attendance during the weeks the questionnaire was administered was 52.[5] Thus, the 33 responses represented approximately 63% of active participants at the time.

[4] See Appendix D.

[5] As with most churches, this was a unique season in the life of the church. Several of our pre-covid members were still not active in person. Alternatively, there was an unexpected influx of new persons in the congregation at the time. Thus, the in-person attendance of 52 was actually almost the same as the pre-Covid attendance but represented a congregation that had changed. Some of our previously active members would never return due to normal aging and health factors. I believe the accelerated deterioration of health and participation amongst older members was typical in other small, older congregations of the area.

Results of the First Anonymous Questionnaire

The goal of the first questionnaire was mainly to establish a baseline against which to compare the results of the second data set. However, there are a few notable observations from analyzing the first data set by itself.

The first questionnaire confirmed the congregation holds a strong conviction that they should be engaging in evangelism. All of the respondents agreed with the first statement, "I believe that God desires all believers to share their faith and invite others to faith in Jesus." The responses were confident, with 30/33 indicating they "Strongly Agree" with the statement. [6] This confirmed what I hoped and expected to find. It rules out the possibility that any substantial portion of the congregation might not be engaging in evangelism as a result of their convictions or beliefs.

It was also confirmed that few persons in the congregation had been engaging in evangelism. Only 9/33 indicated they "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the statement: "Within the last 6 months I have shared the content of the gospel with a non-churchgoer."[7] This confirmed the suspected problem, that my congregation is not actively engaging in evangelism.

The first questionnaire confirmed that the congregation as a whole was not actively forming or strengthening relationships with an eye toward evangelism. Only 11/33 went out of their way in the prior 30 days to make or strengthen a relationship with a non-churchgoer "in hope of sharing the gospel with them in the future."[8] Just 10/33 had participated during the

[6] Statement 1, Appendix D.

[7] Statement 11, Appendix D.

[8] Statement 15, Appendix D.

previous two months in opportunities through the church that can help them form relationships with non-churchgoers.[9] Only 4/33 had formed a positive relationship with a resident of Crescent Place or Schill Manor in the prior six months.[10]

The number of persons who had developed positive relationships with students in the prior six months was slightly higher than I had anticipated, but was still low, with 13/33 indicating agreement.[11] It may have been higher than I expected due to the fact that for two of the prior six months our church was the community distribution site for free breakfasts and lunches provided by the school district while there was no in-person schooling. Once a week during those two months the congregation had up to five volunteers packing meals and distributing to families who picked them up at the church. Although this service took place before the formal initiation of ministries related to this project, the opportunity to serve in this capacity was a direct result of relationships formed in the school district by church leaders and as a result of the already identified mission focus on students. Despite this particular result being slightly higher than anticipated, it remains notable that the highest number of responses to this statement and to each of the relationship statements in the above paragraph was "Strongly Disagree." [12] This indicates a clear need for redemptive relationships in general and for relationships in the particular demographics targeted by this project, students and seniors.

[9] Statement 10, Appendix D.

[10] Statement 17, Appendix D.

[11] Statement 16, Appendix D.

[12] Statements 10, 15-17, Appendix D.

The first questionnaire confirmed the lack of evangelism and relationships with non-believers in the congregation. Below I will describe the efforts designed to remedy this problem.

Developing Relationships

In the Summer of 2020, the church's vision team and session officially adopted the mission focus of students and seniors. The goal was to meet the need for relationships in these subgroups and simultaneously build a bridge to facilitate evangelism.

At first this vision seemed almost laughable. While the need for relationship in these subgroups had been identified within the vision team in January 2020, this vision was officially presented and adopted several months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Our session was physically gathered for the first time in several months, wearing masks and scattered throughout the entire sanctuary. Several of those present were not worshipping in person with us at the time. The irony of the timing and content of this vision was palpable. How could the church plan for building relationships in the community when they were barely maintaining relationships with each other? This was a significant barrier, but also a providential blessing as the halting of regular programs and ministries allowed us to focus on reimagining what our church could be. Below, I will describe the ministries that were formed to meet the goal of building relationships among seniors and students and how they were executed. The assessments offered below will be focused on answering the question: Were relationships formed? The analysis in Chapter 5 will be focused more on the question: Did the relationships and other efforts in the project result in more evangelism or readiness to engage in evangelism?

Students

Developing relationships with students and engaging in evangelism seemed at first like an unattainable goal. The church had not had a vital children's ministry or youth group in more than 20 years and in recent years neither had any other church in town. Families with children who were engaged in church programs generally travel about 30 minutes to participate in one of two very large churches in the nearest suburbs. At the time the church could not imagine being involved much with local students, so the vision team was recommissioned with the task of researching means of developing relationships with students. For roughly six months they studied the needs of students, examined resources in the church and community, and met with successful student ministries in the county.

In January 2021, the church adopted a plan to form an after-school ministry that would serve children five days a week. After-school programming was chosen largely because it was an explicit need named among community leaders and it was noticed that almost every other town in our county had vibrant after school programming or ministries. It was also chosen over several other programs because it offered consistent opportunity for building relationships. Many other event driven ideas may have appealed to more students but would offer less opportunity for relationship.

The plan for an after-school program would involve significant updates to the church building, the organization of an independent 501(c)(3), hiring a full-time director, and recruiting a committed volunteer base. The church quickly allocated $150,000 for the necessary updates and seed money for the after-school ministry. This was a monumental step of faith for a small church of less than 100 members in the midst of a pandemic! By March, the board of the after-

school ministry was formed with representation from the church, the local school district, and one of the church's long-time ministry partners. By June, Kids Quest Inc. was officially formed, and a director was hired in July.[13]

The Kids Quest Mission Statement is: "To provide a quality after school program that introduces children to Jesus, supports academic growth and develops community."[14] Introducing children to Jesus through evangelism is the first priority of Kids Quest. Every day the children learn a Bible story and how it relates to the gospel. Further, it is expected that the Director take time whenever possible to discuss questions of faith with any child throughout the program that shows interest. Supporting academic growth was included in the statement as a tangible way to meet the expressed needs of the school district. Each student receives help with homework as needed. The mission of developing community is in response to the need communicated by the school district, but also meets the church and my project's goal of building relationships. This is accomplished by introducing children to healthy relationships with adult and teen volunteers, connecting them to the church family, and exposing them to various community groups during the after-school program.

The plan for Kids Quest was originally to appeal to a large group of families with students who relied on overcrowded and expensive daycare centers for after-school care. Kids Quest would charge $10 per day, and up to 10 scholarships would be offered to families

[13] Care was taken in the formation of Kid Quest Inc. to protect the founding evangelistic vision of the church. For example, the by-laws stipulate that the mission and vision cannot be changed without concurrence with the church's Session. The Session of the church will always make up 50% of the Kids Quest Board and shall have their own vote regarding the hiring of any director.

[14] For more information visit www.kidsquest.org/ourteam.

referred through the school district.[15] These scholarship families would verify their qualification by producing their state issued card for food stamps. Scholarship students will then by charged only $2 per day. The hope was that over three years the program would reach up to 40 students and be mostly funded by tuition and community donations.

The Kids Quest ministry launched at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, and by the end of September they had 7-10 kids, from grades 1-4, participating every school day. In order to maximize the potential for relationship, enrollment was only open at the start to students signing up for all five days of the week. In November, the board approved part-time options for students who needed only two or three days of care as a trial policy. It was found after the first month of this policy that significant relationships with these part-time students were still being formed, even with less time per week than the other students.

Each day of the program involves four elements: fun, gospel conversation, homework help, and snack. There is fun in some organized games and free time for play. Fun is an important bridge to relationship with children. The gospel conversation involves the children learning a Bible story and relating it to the gospel. The volunteers also help with homework and there is a snack served every day.

Enrollment has stayed around 10 kids throughout the school year. Every student is currently receiving a scholarship. The children attending can be categorized as those with varying degrees of special needs. Several of the students have therapeutic staff support (TSS), also known as one-on-ones, during the school day. Some of the TSS's are "wraparounds" and accompany the children to Kids Quest. One of the students is on the autism spectrum.

[15] Average after-school daycare in Ellwood City costs between $25 and $35 per day.

Furthermore, of the 10 children enrolled, none live with their father and mother. Two of them are currently in foster care, and three of them have lived in a motel at some point during the first semester. The school principal who serves on the Board of Kids Quest and is an elder in a nearby church of the same denomination has indicated these are some of the toughest students to work with in our local school district. As a result of the intense emotional and behavioral needs of the children, the program is at capacity for the number of adult volunteers present.

Currently the program operates with the Director and one to two volunteers each day. Volunteers who stay for the entire two and half hours of a day are considered "tier one" volunteers. Tier two volunteers can stop in just to serve a snack, help with homework, or bus pick-up. Tier one volunteers are required to affirm a statement of Christian faith and are the frontline of relationship building and personal evangelism with the children. There are a total of eight adults and one teen who serve from the church each week as tier one volunteers. Each of these persons spend two and a half hours per week with the students. There have also been several community volunteers who are involved as substitutes and special guests. These have included the school principal, several teachers, and a few members of other local churches. At least one of the volunteer teachers was eager to have an opportunity to share their testimony with the children outside of school.

The church, the Kids Quest Board, and I had all hoped to engage more than 10 students in the first year. It became clear early on that we were not reaching the intended broad target of higher-functioning daycare families in our community. There were various reasons for this, explored by the board, that are ultimately tangential to this project. Although most were

disappointed in the numbers, there was a unanimous sentiment that regardless of who Kids Quest set out to reach, these 10 children with unique needs are who God sent. Most of the students participating are not in after-school care because their parent/guardians are working, they are participating because they need healthy relationships and community involvement. This is the need we set out to meet.

Are substantial relationships between the congregation and students being formed through Kids Quest? Yes. The children and volunteers have become something like a family. Through the year there have been several weekend birthday parties hosted where all the children and even the adult volunteers are present. The Director helped one family move into their apartment. Several of the children have participated in children's events at the church, and even in Sunday School. The children of Kids Quest are beginning to form relationships with the children of the church. There have been some significant challenges to working with low-income, broken families which have sparked difficult conversations amongst volunteers and the board. These frustrations could have been the end of the program, but the relational bond formed with the children ultimately pulled everyone through these struggles. Although there will likely be changes to the Kids Quest program in the next year for the sake of engaging more students, I believe the relationships formed with the 10 students engaged this year will impact both the children and the program for years to come.

Seniors

The church is located within a block of two senior citizen apartment complexes. They are the only two such buildings in town, Crescent Place and R. J. Schill Manor. The church did

not have much trouble imagining ways to develop relationships in these buildings. Some of these residents had already participated in our church's previous outreach efforts over the years and it seemed like an attainable goal to develop those relationships.

The main idea for reaching these buildings came forth almost immediately, the church would begin monthly fellowship hours in each building. Prior to COVID-19, the church's "coffee hour" had been a staple in the life of the congregation. Many persons would stay for up to an hour after church every Sunday for snack and fellowship. This fellowship was a blessing but had become very insular. When the vision team examined volunteer hours in the church, many people's only participation outside of worship was in preparing food for this fellowship, which served only the core members and did not facilitate the church's mission. Since coffee hour was temporarily halted by the pandemic, the idea was to restart it with a rotating location for the fellowship hour. The first Sunday of each month would be for potluck meals at the church, the second Sunday's coffee hour would take place at Schill Manor, the third Sunday's coffee hour at Crescent Place, and the fourth Sunday would be a simplified coffee hour at the church. As plans developed, we rebranded the "coffee hour" as "Snack & Chat."[16]

The original plan was to invite the whole congregation to cross the street after worship to fellowship with residents during Snack & Chat. As the pandemic continued and brought lasting restrictions the church had not anticipated, the plan was altered and small teams of two were formed to host the fellowship. In addition to these teams of two volunteers, the deacon assigned to each building and myself, the Pastor, were sent to represent the congregation. This significantly lessened the opportunity for relationship building but was a necessary adaptation.

[16] See Appendix E.

Below I will describe how these Snack & Chat events and other efforts proceeded in each of the buildings.

Schill Manor

Schill Manor has a total of 70 apartments, occupied almost entirely by single tenants. The church coordinated with the building manager and the association of tenants to obtain permission and cooperation. The community room in their basement made an ideal location, but due to the pandemic we were limited to a total of 20 persons in the room. As one of the church's members had recently moved into this building, she recruited one or two others in the building who would prepare coffee and tables ahead of the event.

Snack & Chat began at Schill Manor in July 2021 and the first event was a huge success. There was a full room of 20 persons. Everyone was excited to gather in person after such a long time of isolation. In August, participation among the residents dropped to 10. In September, only one resident participated. In October, the number of COVID-19 cases in our area was increasing dramatically and the building manager, along with the church's team, decided to stop the gatherings.

In addition to Snack & Chat, several other efforts aimed at Schill Manor were initiated by different teams or individuals in the church. In the Spring of 2021, before the Snack & Chat events began, our deacons partnered with the local Rotary Club (led by some elders in our church) to purchase raised garden beds for residents. On a Saturday morning, four members of the church delivered the beds, loaded them with soil, and the residents proudly planted flowers

and vegetables. The project gained a lot of attention in our community and the gardens became a source of great pride amongst the residents.

The deacon assigned to Schill Manor discovered they had a food pantry which was mostly stocked with items residents received in monthly boxes from the Pittsburgh Food Bank. Residents were simply discarding food into the pantry that they were not able to eat because of sodium or sugar content. The deacon formed a partnership in which the church fulfilled a list of staples and healthy items that residents requested and helped to pass along their unwanted items to the local food bank for others to use. This partnership developed further at Christmas when participating residents joined the church's mission of sponsoring Christmas gifts for children through a local ministry. They supplied monetary donations and the church's deacons did the shopping. In November, our Grief Share Coordinator hosted a special Surviving the Holidays seminar in the community room of Schill Manor. It was well attended.

After the first Snack & Chat event, several residents asked about having more interactive and even religious events. The next month, I organized a communion service in the community room. Residents were required to sign up in advance per the building manager's request, and we reached the capacity of 18 residents at the first service. Before the service we took prayer requests and residents shared where they had previously been involved in a church. There were even a few in attendance with no prior church affiliation. The service included traditional prayers and order of worship, and those who were baptized and professed faith were served communion. I have been holding these services every six weeks (with the exception of a COVID-19 cancellation) and participation has held up around 10-15 persons.

The leadership of the church and I have mixed feelings about the success of our relationship building at Schill Manor. The lack of traction with Snack & Chat was an obvious disappointment. The effect of the pandemic was hard to overstate, but I believe there were other factors in its lack of traction. The church had assumed at the outset that since relationship was the goal, they should keep their efforts aimed solely at that, and not get "too preachy." It was a less is more approach, aimed at building trust. However, it became clear that the residents wanted more than just relationship. A visit with some snacks was not enough. Some of the residents wanted hot meals and entertainment, but some were genuinely hungry for spiritual food. I believe this is why we saw more interest in communion services.

Despite the disappointment with Snack & Chat, there were several indicators that relationships were nonetheless being formed between the congregation and residents at Schill Manor. For example, the deacon involved in stocking their food pantry and coordinating a Christmas gift ministry is engaging in their own accord. The Grief Share coordinator is also in ongoing contact with several residents who have lost loved ones this year. As the Pastor I have come to know the names and stories of many residents. I was invited to be a guest at the women's Bible Study that meets every week in a resident's room. At least three residents participated in a fellowship dinner at the church in the Fall and our children's Christmas event. These are all indicators of relationships being built that would likely not exist apart from the efforts of this project.

Crescent Place

Crescent Place is run by the county housing authority and contains 48 apartments, currently occupied by mostly single tenants. Since this is a county run building, there were significant barriers and COVID-19 restrictions that were not in place through much the rest of small-town Ellwood City. The community room and common spaces in Crescent Place have been closed since March 2020 and remain so today. Whereas Schill Manor has a building manager on-site, Crescent Place shares a building manager with several other, much larger facilities in the county. When I first began communicating with this director, residents were not even allowed to sit in lawn chairs outside or congregate on the back porch of the facility. All of their furniture had been removed and signs posted. I thought these policies would be short-lived, but they have loosened only slightly in the past two years. Aside from being senior citizens, a very high percentage of residents at Crescent Place have cognitive impairments and disabilities. I believe their mental and physical health was impaired as much by the restrictions as by the threat of COVID-19. In the summer of 2020, I began calling the county offices to advocate on behalf of a member of our church and other residents in the building for their use of at least the outdoor communal space. Residents were already gathering without permission, but I was seeking approval. More than a year later, the church quietly received permission to host monthly fellowship, outdoors on the back patio, in spite of public policy. We would need to bring and remove our own table for serving and chairs for seating.

Snack & Chat began at Crescent Place in August 2021. One resident had become a member just two years prior. Just weeks before the first event, another resident and her adult child attended the church for the first time. They heard about Snack & Chat during the service

and immediately joined the team who was hosting. In addition to the two residents, an elder from the session and a deacon were assigned to the team. The events were held outdoors every month from August through October. In November we received quiet permission to gather indoors, again bringing our own furniture. Around 10 residents, 20% of the building, gathered each time. Several of the residents began to contribute to the snacks by bringing their own baked goods. In December, there were some COVID-19 cases in the building, and the church's Christmas dinner was promoted in place of Snack & Chat. At least five residents crossed the street and participated. Several meals were put in take-out containers for those asking to bring meals to their less mobile neighbors. Snack & Chat resumed in late March 2022.

Aside from Snack & Chat, there were no other outreaches directly targeting residents of Crescent Place. The restrictions of COVID-19 played some role in this. It is also important to understand the cultural dynamic of Crescent Place versus Schill Manor. The residents of Schill Manor are mostly financially independent, formerly active members of the community. The residents of Crescent Place represent the lower socio-economic persons of our community and a high percentage of them have varying levels of mental illness. Their need for relationships is perhaps higher, but the cost of investing in those relationships is also higher. There are some in the congregation who are intimidated by these residents. These are perhaps reasons why fewer formal connections were made at Crescent Place compared to Schill Manor.

All things considered, significant relationships are being formed between the congregation and residents of Crescent Place. In the past year, several residents have participated in Sunday morning worship with the church. Two of those residents became members and worship with us almost every Sunday. One of them has brought several of their

friends and serves on the team coordinating Snack & Chat. While perhaps less formal program or effort went into creating these relationships, they are nonetheless being formed. This is not an uncommon way for the Holy Spirit to work in ministry.

Equipping for Evangelism

In addition to building relationships between the church and the community, I sought to equip the congregation for evangelism in various other ways. I preached a sermon series on faith journeys, organized testimonies for Sunday worship, organized discussions and trainings on evangelism, and generally sought to lift up evangelistic prayers throughout the church.

Journeys of Faith in the Gospel of John

From July 2021 through the end of October, I preached a series of sermons titled "Journeys of Faith in the Gospel of John."[17] The texts and sermons focused on persons in John who showed movement toward, and sometimes away, from faith in Jesus. Below I will cover some of the common themes from the series as they relate to evangelism.

The most direct connection in these sermons to evangelism was the pattern of persons who immediately share what they have learned of Jesus with those around them. Five of the first six sermons in the series provided concrete examples of this. John the Baptist points two of his disciples to Jesus saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"[18]

[17] See Appendix F.

[18] John 1:29.

Andrew, one of the two disciples who took John's direction, immediately goes to his brother Simon Peter saying, "We have found the Messiah."[19] They next day, Philip meets Jesus, and immediately goes to his brother Nathanael saying, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."[20] The woman of Samaria, after discovering Jesus as the Messiah leaves behind her jar and goes directly to her village saying, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"[21] The Roman official whose son was healed brings his household into faith, "The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' And he himself believed, and all his household."[22] The Roman official knew the hour and shared this sign and his faith with the household. Week after week in the sermon series, these examples were pointed out alongside the main themes of each text.

The general concept of faith journey was an important theme throughout the sermon series. I taught that everyone is on a journey of faith. Some may be headed toward Christ in faith or faithfulness and others may be headed away from Christ, but all are on a journey. Some of the persons, such as the woman of Samaria in John 4, seemed to take sudden and dramatic steps of faith in Jesus. Others, such as Nicodemus in John 3, had less direct paths. Nicodemus seemed to be genuinely seeking in John 3 but was not ready to take a dramatic step forward. Later, in John 7 and 19, Nicodemus seems to have advanced in his faith journey with Jesus

[19] John 1:41.

[20] John 1:45.

[21] John 4:29.

[22] John 4:53.

when defending his ministry and aiding in his burial. In highlighting these characters and their journeys of faith I was trying to give the congregation a less static way to understand non-believers, as well as help them to better understand their own faith journeys.

Identifying complexity in faith journeys serves to encourage evangelism even when fruit is not immediately obvious. It is common today to assert conversion and salvation (or saving faith) happen in clearly defined moments, but the accounts in John's gospel suggest otherwise. In addition to the ambiguity about Nicodemus' discipleship, there were several characters and sermons in this series that raised questions about the moment of conversion or salvation. For example, with the Roman official discussed above, it was a step of faith when he sought Jesus to heal his son. He also "believed the word that Jesus spoke to him" and took a step of faith in trusting enough to return home without Jesus.[23] Finally, when he realizes the healing took place at the moment of Jesus' word, "He himself believed."[24] In the context of this man's faith journey, what is belief? When was he "saved"? What about those in John 12 who "believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God"?[25] Even the twelve, who had already committed themselves to following Jesus, are required by Jesus to take significant steps in their faith journeys throughout the gospel. For example, in John 14, Thomas, Philip, and Judas (not Iscariot) each ask questions of Jesus which prompt his assessment that they do not know him. The disciples in general have many failings

[23] John 4:50.

[24] John 4:53.

[25] John 12:43.

of faith as they follow Jesus. At what point were they "converted" or was their faith "saving"? Was it when they first began to follow Jesus, when they learned he is the only way to the Father, or when they believed in his resurrection?

Raising these questions throughout the sermon series helped to demonstrate a variety of positive ways that persons might respond to evangelism and move forward in their faith journeys, without necessarily asking to pray a sinner's prayer and be baptized. I was able to stress that while it was important to invite persons to receive Jesus or to come to church, there are other important steps that often lead up to or beyond these things, such as trusting in the authority of the Bible, depending on the Holy Spirt, resting exclusively in the faithfulness of Christ instead of our works, etc. These same examples were used to remind long-time believers and members of the church that their own faith journeys were not over.

Journeys of Faith Testimonies

Throughout the Journeys of Faith sermon series, persons were scheduled to share prepared testimonies during worship. The intent of these testimonies was to prompt the congregation to reflect on their own faith journeys and gain confidence in sharing testimony with one another. If the congregation is going to speak about their faith with seekers or non-churchgoers, then perhaps they can build their confidence in sharing first with other believers. Hearing weekly about conversion and transformation was also meant to build the congregation's imagination for how the Holy Spirit might move as they engage in evangelism.

Volunteers were asked to keep their testimony close to five minutes or less. It was explained that testimonies could take two different shapes. Persons could share a general

overview of their faith journey or bear witness to a particular recent experience in their journey. Most participants chose to share an overview of their faith journey. As Pastor, I met or spoke with each volunteer the week before they shared to ensure the appropriateness of content and to help focus their stories for the sake of time.

I tried to fill the initial weeks with elders or deacons in our church who had experience sharing their testimonies as part of our leadership training processes. These persons had been coached ahead to highlight certain moments, such as when they accepted the atoning work of Jesus' death on the cross for their forgiveness, when they became involved in a church, and at least one occasion when they experienced growth or took a significant step forward in their faith journey since becoming a believer.

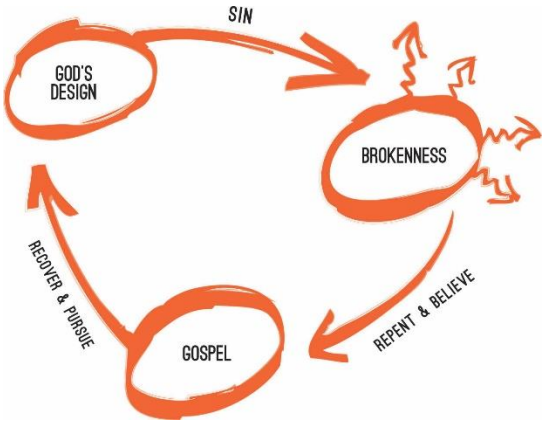
There was healthy variety in the testimonies shared, but one notable theme which developed was that faith often came as the culmination of many influences and experiences in life. A memorable example occurred one Sunday when one of our eldest members shared. This woman, who is in her 90's, began her testimony with a story of miracles involved in her conception and birth. Despite my attempts to focus her stories and timing in meeting with her beforehand, she spoke for more than 20 minutes, telling practically her whole life story. It was a precarious moment in worship, but there was no acceptable way to interrupt a beloved matriarch in such a setting. I initially felt embarrassed and responsible for losing control of the service. However, as several other testimonies in the following weeks included stories I would have deemed tangential, I began to appreciate that it is not as easy as I might have once thought to sort out the significant parts from the insignificant parts of our faith journeys. God is often working in ways we can only fully appreciate with a lifetime of reflection, as was the case

for the woman whose example I described. As I gained appreciation of this idea myself, I also reflected aloud on it with the congregation in worship. This theme was important because it gave significance to the small and seemingly insignificant moments we share with others as we engage in evangelism and seek to help them forward in their journeys of faith.

Evangelism Training

In June 2021, I introduced the Session of the church to an evangelism resource by Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations*. The book utilizes a tool for sharing the gospel using three circles: God's design, brokenness, and gospel.[26] See Figure 3 below.

FIGURE 3. *Three Circles Tool.*



[26] Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel* Conversations, (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2016), 73-88.

This tool is designed to be easily communicated and easily taught. The idea is that it can be done in under three minutes and you can scribble on a napkin if necessary. After reviewing the tool with the church's session, copies of the book were distributed to the congregation.

In late July, I hosted a weeknight discission on the broad topic of evangelism. The focus in this first meeting was to discuss and review what evangelism is and the biblical mandate to engage in it. My purpose in this meeting was to gauge how receptive the congregation had been to the book and the themes of evangelism in my sermons and to cement any wavering convictions. In August, I held another discussion, specifically about the three circles method. In this meeting I demonstrated the tool myself, and the group discussed their assessment of the tool and their comfortability with a direct and summary approach to evangelism. In September, I hosted a workshop at the church and participants were given a chance to roleplay and practice sharing with each other. Lastly, in November, the congregation was invited to a half-day workshop using the same resource, hosted by their presbytery (Presbytery of the Alleghenies). It was led by a Pastor of one of the Family Church congregations in West Palm Beach, FL, the church whose lead Pastors developed *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations*. The workshop focused on training participants to use the three circles tool and on developing an evangelistic culture in the congregation. The Sunday after this workshop, just a couple weeks after concluding the Journey of Faith in the Gospel of John sermon series, I preached from Romans 10:5-17 and shared the three circles tool in worship. The congregation was given scrap paper and pencils to practice while I demonstrated by sharing the gospel with them.

I was disappointed that less than five persons attended any one of these discussions and workshops. This was the first in-person, weeknight discussion group held at the church since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was surely a factor in participation. Interestingly, the few who did participate were not from the typical crowd of persons who usually participate in our weeknight Bible studies or topical discussions. Those who participated were some of our newest members or Sunday visitors. In the first meeting I expected to have to convince everyone that they needed to evangelize, but those who came had already solidly adopted this viewpoint. Even in the workshops involving roleplay, the participants were enthusiastic and willing. These events were a stretch for an older congregation. It is hard to sort out the true effect of COVID-19 on participation, but I took away from these meetings an impression that some of our older, most involved members and leaders were not as likely to engage in evangelism or evangelistic training, as our newer and younger persons.

Aside from the events above, I generally tried to include evangelism in any prayer offered at the church. During worship on Sunday mornings, in committee meetings, small group meetings, and Sunday school classes, I asked persons to pray for opportunities to share the gospel or to celebrate any opportunities they already had. Most of these prayers were offered by myself, but this is unfortunately typical in my setting that few other persons are willing to pray aloud in the congregation. These prayers are no less effective before God and also convey evangelistic values to the congregation. While building relationships was intended to be the critical component of this project, these other efforts explained above were happening simultaneously and bear relevance to the overall goal of affecting engagement in evangelism.

Conclusions

The observations above demonstrate that in spite of their convictions, the church is struggling to engage in evangelism, but they are building relationships while strengthening their understanding. The questionnaire confirmed their convictions and their shortcomings regarding evangelism. Through the initiatives of Kids Quest and various efforts at Schill Manor and Crescent Place, the congregation has begun developing substantive relationships with non-churchgoing students and seniors. On Sunday mornings and a variety of other places, the culture of evangelism in the congregation has been nourished. All these things have been demonstrated above. In the next chapter I will assess the question: Have these relationships resulted in any tangible increase in evangelistic behavior?

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW RELATIONSHIPS EFFECT EVANGELISM

Objective

In Chapter 4 I described the ministries aimed at building relationships between the congregation and the targeted subgroups of seniors and students in the Ellwood City community. I also described how I tried to equip the congregation with a biblical understanding of evangelism alongside these efforts. Below, I will analyze the results of the second Anonymous Questionnaire to demonstrate more objectively the development of relationships, any increase in the congregation's engagement in evangelism, and any correlation between relationships and evangelism. In addition to the data, I will offer some personal observations and conclusions about how the hypothesis was proven or disproven through the project. Finally, I will reflect on some ways this thesis-project might affect my future ministry and be useful for evangelism in the broader American church.

Second Anonymous Questionnaire

The second Anonymous Questionnaire was administered in early February 2022. This was eight months from the first questionnaire, seven months after the first Snack & Chat ministry to seniors and six months into the Kids Quest after-school ministry to students. It was administered in the same way as the first questionnaire.[1] I received 30 responses, representing

[1] For details on how the Anonymous Questionnaires were administered, see pages 87-88 in Chapter 4.

58% of active participants at the time.[2] This is comparable to the 33 responses received for the first questionnaire.

Results of the Second Anonymous Questionnaire

The results of the second Anonymous Questionnaire indicate a clear increase in relationships, a clear increase evangelism, and no significant change in behaviors related to the context of evangelism. Below, I will contrast the results of pertinent statements in the questionnaires and form some conclusions.

Relationships

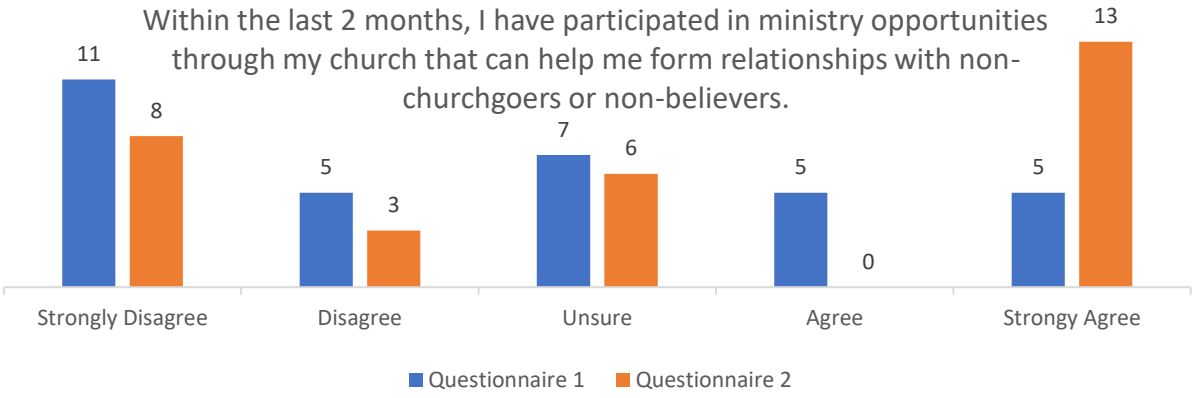
The data confirmed my general assessment from Chapter 4 that relationships were indeed being formed. Four of the statements aimed directly at measuring relationship showed improvement. Responses to Statement 10 indicate a dramatic uptick of participation in ministries that can help form relationships with non-churchgoers and or non-believers. See Figure 4 below. The most common response moved from "Strongly Disagree" in the first questionnaire to "Strongly Agree" in the second questionnaire. The "Strongly Agree" responses rose from just five participants to 13.[3] The fact that all respondents in agreement with Statement 10 signified "Strongly Agree," indicates that participants in these programs are very aware or conscious of the reason for their involvement in these programs. They are not only

[2] See Appendix G.

[3] Compare Statement 10 in Appendix D and Appendix G.

volunteering, they are volunteering with a conscious intent to build relationships with non-churchgoers and non-believers.

FIGURE 4. *Comparative Responses to Statement 10.*



Given the increase of participation in these ministries, it is not surprising that significant new relationships were formed among the targeted demographic of students and seniors. Respondents indicating strong agreement with Statement 16, about forming at least one positive relationship with a student in the past six months, rose from 9/33 to 15/30.[4] The increase was even more dramatic for Statement 17, where the total of those indicating agreement ("Agree" and "Strongly Agree") that they had formed at least one positive relationship with a resident of Crescent Place or Schill Manor rose from just 4/33 to 14/30.[5] These results confirm more objectively the assessment of Chapter 4 that the Snack & Chat

[4] Compare Statement 16 in Appendix D and Appendix G.

[5] Compare Statement 17 in Appendix D and Appendix G.

ministry and Kids Quest after-school ministry were successful in creating relationships between the congregation and these populations.

In addition to relationships formed within the context of the ministries designed to do so, the second questionnaire indicated some improvement in general relationship habits. Total agreement with Statement 15, about going out of the way "to make or strengthen a relational connection with a non-churchgoer, in hope of sharing the gospel with them in the future" rose from 11/33 to 15/30.[6] This improvement was not as dramatic as others but is noticeable and reflects the observation noted above, that individuals not only volunteered as participants in relationship-building ministries, but did so with clear intent, "in hope of sharing the gospel."

Evangelism

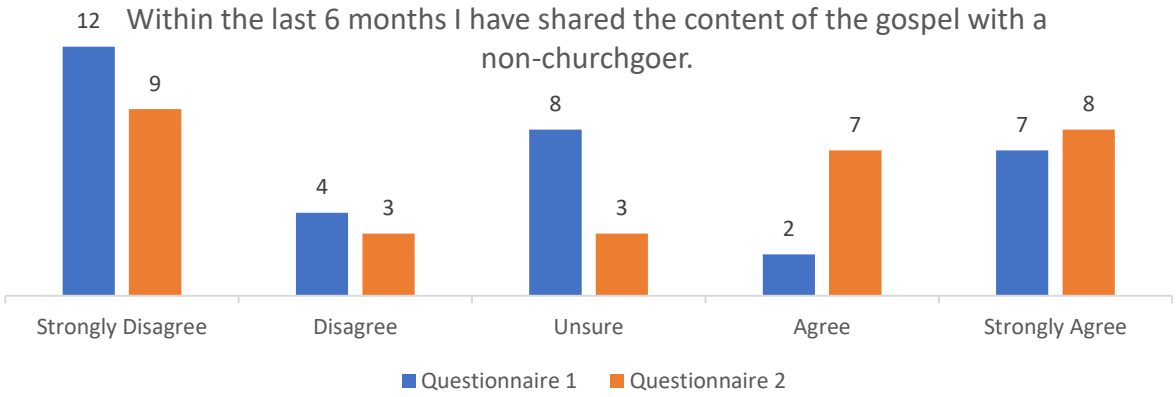
The ultimate aim of this thesis-project is not merely to produce a mission focused church with community relationships, it is to catalyze evangelism through building relationships. Having successfully created relationships between the church and the target groups of students and seniors, the central issue becomes whether or not the congregation increased its engagement in evangelism. Specifically, did more of the congregation share the content of the gospel with non-churchgoers or non-believers during the course of the project than before?

The results of the second questionnaire indicate that there was indeed a noticeable increase in evangelism. See Figure 5. The number of persons who had shared the gospel with a

[6] Compare Statement 15 in Appendix D and Appendix G.

non-churchgoer in the previous six months (indicated by responses of "Agree" or "Strongly Agree") rose from just 9/33 to 15/30, or from 27% to 50% of respondents.[7] In light of the considerable barriers, habits, and deep-seated fears that prevent persons from engaging in evangelism, this modest increase over the course of just six months represents significant progress.

FIGURE 5. *Comparative Responses to Statement 11*.



A close analysis of the 15 individual responses indicating they had shared the content of the gospel reveals a strong correlation between evangelism and relationships. Nine of the 15 who responded in agreement or strong agreement to Statement 11 also indicated they had participated in ministry opportunities with the church that can help them form relationships with non-churchgoers.[8] Stated inversely, 9/13 who participated in ministries that can help them form relationships with non-churchgoers or non-believers also shared the content of the gospel

[7] Compare Statement 11 in Appendix D and Appendix G.

[8] See responses 8, 9, 12, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, and 26 in Appendix H.

with a non-churchgoer or non-believer. Even more significantly, every single one of the 15 who had shared the content of the gospel also responded that they had formed at least one new relationship with either a student or senior resident of Crescent Place or Schill Manor.[9] These results demonstrate a clear correlation between the increase in new relationships and an increase in evangelism. Those who were forming relationships were very likely to share the gospel, and all of those who shared the gospel had also formed relationships. Again, it is helpful to state inversely, that no one who did not form relationships in the targeted groups engaged in evangelism.

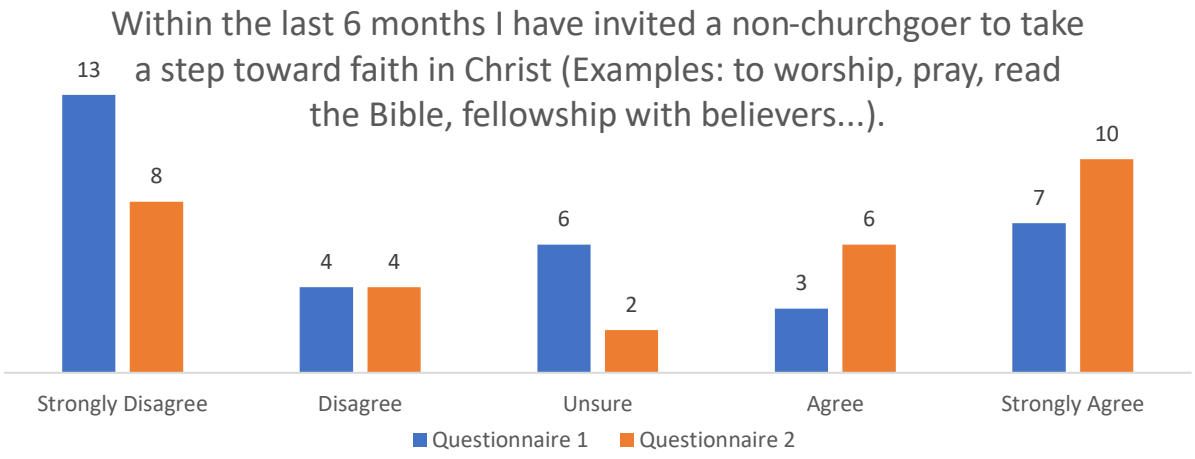
It is notable that there was no significant change in the results of the second questionnaire regarding the non-relationship focused practices identified as context for evangelism. While it would be beneficial if these other behaviors showed improvement also, the lack of change in these other areas supports my hypothesis that it was the formation of new relationships that catalyzed evangelism. If there was significant change in the practices of prayer or listening, then I would have to consider whether such changes may have been more directly behind the increased evangelism, instead of relationships. Seeing improvement in all of the relationship focused statements implies the correlation I was looking for between relationships and those engaging in evangelism.

There was one other notable contrast in the results of the second questionnaire from the first. There was a significant increase in the total number of persons who responded in agreement with Statement 12: "Within the last 6 months, I have invited a non-churchgoer to take a step toward faith in Christ (Examples: to worship, pray, read the Bible, fellowship with

[9] See responses 1, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 26 in Appendix H.

believers…).” See Figure 6. Those in agreement with this statement (“Strongly Agree” or “Agree”) rose from just 10/33 to 16/30, or from 30% to 53% of respondents.[10] The most common response to this statement changed from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” It is immensely encouraging to see that half of the respondents are actively inviting others to take steps in their faith journeys. Arguably one of the hardest components of evangelism to engage in is personally inviting someone to respond. It is not until an invitation is made that one actually risks rejection.

FIGURE 6. *Comparative Responses to Statement 12*.



Just as with relationships and evangelism, a close analysis of the 16 individuals who invited others to take a step toward Christ reveals a strong correlation with between these invitations, relationships, and evangelism. Every single one of the 16 who extended invitations also indicated they had formed at least one positive relationship with either a student and or a

[10] Compare Statement 12 in Appendix D and Appendix G.

senior resident of Crescent Place or Schill Manor.[11] It is also notable that 13/16 who invited others to take a step forward were among the 15 respondents who had shared the gospel.[12] Inversely, 13/15 who shared the content of the gospel also invited someone to take a step toward faith in Christ. These findings strengthen the suspected correlation between relationships and evangelism, as inviting someone forward in their faith journey is a critical and often difficult part of evangelism.

Limits

While the data confirms my hypothesis, there are several limits to its usefulness. To begin with, the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to define the category of "active" participants to whom the questionnaires were administered. There were several persons invited to respond to the first questionnaire that never returned to active participation and a few who came under the care of our shut-in ministry before the second data set was collected. I would not expect those who were participating remotely during the six months of the project to have participated in the ministries or to have been affected much in their evangelistic behaviors.

It is also true that the correlation between relationships and increased evangelism does not necessarily indicate causation. While I think the correlation is strong and relevant, what actually caused persons to share the gospel more often is likely a broad and complicated set of

[11] See responses 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, and 25 in Appendix H.

[12] See responses 1, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, and 24 in Appendix H.

influences known and brought about only by the Lord. I believe relationships are one of the most important factors in this particular congregation, but I cannot prove it with my data.

Lastly, I believe that those theologically or ideologically opposed to evangelism were likely to self-select out of the questionnaires. As my preaching and teaching centered on evangelism, there were a few persons whose hearts and attitudes hardened against the idea. If these persons filled out the first questionnaire, I think they were unlikely to fill it out the second time. Likewise, those who were enthusiastic and responsive to my emphasis on evangelism were likely eager to participate in the questionnaire. This may have skewed the overall percentages of responses in the second questionnaire and is the reason I compared the actual number of responses instead of percentages only.

Personal Observations

There were many observable indications of evangelism and positive outcomes during the project. I will chronicle some of these observations below as they relate to the ministries aimed at students, seniors, and general outcomes in the congregation.

Students

Several students with no prior exposure to the church made professions of faith in Christ. Throughout the Kids Quest ministry, the director pulled children aside who showed response or strong reactions to the content of the Bible stories and gospel conversations. During those separate and private conversations, three students asked to be led in prayer to receive Christ and commit their life to him. One of those students has been very zealous in his

love for God's Word and every night he took home a copy of the *The Action Bible*, a comic or graphic novel version for kids.[13] Eventually he read it through entirely and wore out the cover and the church purchased him his own copy. In the Spring semester I called the school's bus company to inquire about transportation for a program Kids Quest is working on for the coming year, and when the operator at the bus garage realized I was from the church that hosted Kids Quest, she shared a story that was circulating among the drivers. The story was of this student who is dropped off at our ministry, carries his Bible with him and enthusiastically shared with the bus drivers, "I am a Christian now." It is immensely gratifying to hear such a story in the community. In addition to the three students who were explicitly led to receive Christ, two other students, who are siblings, became somewhat frequent participants in the church's Sunday School program. Their faither, who has custody on the weekend, is driving 40 minutes to bring the kids for Sunday School. On Easter Sunday there were two families from Kids Quest represented in worship.

Also, as a direct result of the relationships formed in the school district while establishing Kids Quest, I had a unique opportunity to share the gospel with a member of the school's administration I had been working with. In the Spring of 2021, right after we formally announced our plans to move forward with the program, Susan called my office during the week to request a counseling appointment.[14] Susan described herself as a non-Christian, who knew very little about Christianity, but is very interested in spirituality. She shared in our first

[13] Sergio Cariello, *The Action Bible: God's Redemptive Story*, edited by Doug Mauss, First ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010).

[14] Susan is a fictitious name used here to protect privacy.

meeting that she had been experiencing problems in her relationships, was beginning to question her worldview and felt "the universe was leading [me] to you." After covering some relatively minor issues about relationships, Susan agreed to meet with me for two more sessions. At the first session we identified the influence of eastern spirituality that she was consuming and how it was impacting her decisions. Between the second and third meeting she read Tim Keller's, *The Reason for God* and began reading the gospel of John.[15] At the third meeting I presented the gospel to her plainly and invited her to respond. She was very grateful for our time, but indicated she was hung up on the concept of repentance and was particularly unsure it was necessary for her to give up certain spiritual practices such as "thanking the universe." She left indicating that she would now pray also to God in the name of Jesus and believes he is real. This was a unique opportunity to share and converse about the gospel in depth with someone who truly had very little exposure to Christianity prior to our relationship and conversations. I doubt Susan would have sought answers in a church or from a Pastor had my church not been building trust in developing the after-school ministry. Conversations like this are few and far between in a small town.

Seniors

Since beginning the Snack & Chat ministries, three residents of Crescent Place have become members and active participants in the church. They each attend weekly and have each brought friends to the services. One of those three is in her late 70's and indicated that although she had belonged to churches in the past, no one had ever asked her if she was

[15] Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2016).

baptized. As a younger person she had been ashamed to come forward as one who had not been baptized, but she was excited to finally be invited and shared a personal testimony with the congregation at her baptism. Although this was not exactly a first-time profession of faith, it was nonetheless significant as our church's first adult baptism in anyone's memory. Also, at the March Snack & Chat at Crescent Place there was a significant conversation and curiosity around faith. The residents were curious about the morning's sermon, and members of the team shared their thoughts, which led to residents sharing some vulnerable past experiences and asking more questions about our faith. Many of the Crescent Place residents continue to participate in the church's fellowship events whether they take place at Crescent Place or the church.

Churchwide

There were several memorable moments to celebrate throughout the course of the project that I think are related to the efforts at increasing evangelism. We had two monumental days for Sunday School participation during the six-month period. Our normal Sunday School participation includes 10 or at most 11 children. These represent just three committed families, including my own. The Sunday School teachers planned parties for Valentine's Day and Palm Sunday, and more than 30 children attended each of these events. This would be an incredible turnout for any children's event at our church, and for them to show up repeatedly on Sunday mornings was awesome. The 20 extra children represent the invitations of only three families whose children make up the usual 10! These same families form the lion's share of the volunteer base for Kids Quest. Many of the friends they invited are part of a local group

exercise class to which several women from the church belong, including two mothers of our Sunday School children. In conversation with one of these mothers, I have seen that the women in our church have thought very intentionally about how they collectively share their faith with these friends from the gym. Their courage in personally inviting so many, with such an incredible response rate, speaks volumes about their efforts. The community witness, evangelism, and invitations organically taking place in this subgroup of our church and the community is exactly the kind of thing churches everywhere need.

In the course of these same six months our sixth to eight grade Sunday School also saw remarkable growth. There have been just two students in that class. One of them invited a friend, who began showing up for church every week a half hour early. This same junior high boy then brought a friend, and then another friend. The three new boys walk to church on their own every Sunday for Sunday School at 9:30 AM and often stay for worship. On Easter Sunday, the first boy's family came for worship. His parents stopped me afterward to share that their son has changed drastically since first coming and they were eager to understand what had changed him. Once again, it is immensely gratifying to hear such remarks from an unchurched family. The one sixth grade boy who had originally been a part of that class also went through our confirmation class this year. As he shared a personal statement of faith with the congregation at his confirmation, he articulated the gospel very clearly and stated that he believes it is his mission "to share the gospel with [his] friends and invite them to church." I believe his understanding and absorption of this evangelistic responsibility is largely a result of some of the efforts related to this project.

During the sermon series about Journeys of Faith in the Gospel of John, a member of the congregation asked to meet me for coffee. This individual is a Ruling Elder who preaches half of the year as pulpit supply in other local Presbyterian churches and we often meet for coffee as he enjoys reflecting on the ministries of the church in general and questions about leadership. He shared that was very moved and challenged by the testimonies that were shared during the sermon series. He said that it caused him to think reflect about whether he had any recent experiences that he was prepared to share, and that he was thinking more than before about how to interpret and talk about his own coming to faith as a child. This was exactly the kind of response I was hoping to garner from the congregation in the journeys of faith series and was pleased to hear it unsolicited.

Finally, in addition to all these observations in the congregation, there were several opportunities I had personally to share the gospel, which I'm not sure I would have noticed or taken prior to the growth I experienced myself throughout this project. In addition to sharing with the school administrator, there were two other meetings with community persons that became occasions to share the gospel with invitation. On one occasion I met with an acquaintance of a church member whose boyfriend died suddenly. She had a one-year-old baby and was behind in rent. Her crisis was exacerbated as she had moved to the area to live with her boyfriend but had no significant relationships or family to rely upon. Our Deacons and a local social service agency were able to get her some immediate help with bills, and she asked to meet again for some pastoral counseling. In that meeting I discovered the woman had little prior exposure to Christianity or the church, but she and her boyfriend had been talking about God before he died. She asked what Christians believe. She was concerned about her

boyfriend's experience after death. I shared the gospel with her using the three circles method and asked her where she saw herself in them. She indicated she was in brokenness and sin and asked how she could receive Christ saying, "How do I say Yes?".[16] I led her in prayer, gave her a Bible and a copy of *The* Walk, by Stephen Smallman.[17] She moved several weeks later to be near her family, but I was able to follow up with a note of encouragement.

Similarly, I conducted a funeral for the father of a man in the community I had known for almost 10 years. He has always identified as Christian but has not been a part of any church since he was a teenager. His father had left he and his brothers when they were very young for his mother's best friend. The stepmother also had children from a marriage that was broken in the affair and the families never blended. At the funeral, more than 40 years after the divorce, the adult children were still very emotionally volatile and there was a lot of animosity between them. The man sought me for counseling a few weeks following the service to help process his anger with the rest of the family and mistakes he felt were made in his father's healthcare that he felt contributed to his father's death. It was very apparent from conversation and my prior relationship with this man that he approaches life with a very high degree of responsibility and approaches salvation from a works-based righteousness. I took what felt like a considerable risk and shared with him my assessment that his anger with others and the pride he took in his own good works or responsibility were related. I pointed out to him some blatant contradictions in his life that I had observed over the years and suggested his need to fully acknowledge his own

[16] This was at least a month after her boyfriend's death, and she seemed less in a state of shock and more in a normal state of grief.

[17] Stephen Smallman, *The Walk: Steps for New and Renewed Followers of Jesus* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009).

brokenness, sin, and to fully receive salvation on the grounds of faith in Jesus alone. I timidly expected a harsh reaction. He left without saying much, but texted me the following day, "I wanted to thank you for the meaningful discussion yesterday and my new path towards peace is starting today, I am starting the repent process, I look forward to completing the process and making it my new way of life. Regards." Aside from some grammatical and perhaps theological errors in his text, I was pleasantly surprised by his reaction and the Lord's work in his heart.

I cannot easily convey how significant these kinds of events, conversations and reactions are in the usual course of small church and small-town ministry. People are rarely so vulnerable in a community where no one is able to hide and everyone knows everybody. Any one of the above incidences would have been a highlight in my ministry for a year or more. I see their concentration in the duration of this project as a work of the Lord, connected to the emphasis on evangelism.

Conclusions and Reflections

The data and observations above demonstrate a clear correlation between evangelism and relationships formed in a missional church. Those in the church who began forming relationships with the targeted demographics were generally the same persons who indicated they had shared the content of the gospel. There were also tangible outcomes such as professions of faith and increased participation by the targeted groups in faith formation. These are exactly the results I was looking for and they generally support the crux of my hypothesis, that in a congregation with an already healthy missional identity, engagement in evangelism can be improved by developing relationships between the congregation and a specifically

targeted part of the community. In short, developing those relationships appears to be at least one critical factor in increasing evangelism.

Aside from relationships in general, I believe identifying and emphasizing a clear definition of evangelism was also a key contributing factor to its increase. This emphasis and communication of evangelism as sharing the content of the gospel took place in the various efforts aimed at training and equipping the congregation. I first included these efforts simply because it felt foolish not to reinforce these things while introducing relationships. In hindsight, they were likely more important than I realized. I don't think teaching, preaching, training, or vision-casting about evangelism would have effected change on their own if the church wasn't also offering opportunities for relationship with non-believers, but I do think these efforts played an important role. It could be that the new relationships did not directly catalyze evangelism, but that the relationships created an urgency for persons to practice what they had been learning. Ultimately, these things may not be sorted out completely and it remains that both relationships and equipping for evangelism are necessary.

As a result of things learned throughout the project there are several refinements I would make and things I hope to develop in the future. I would clarify the initial assessment of the congregation's missional posture. The missional posture assessment effectively verified that the church was ready for rich community engagement, but if the church was truly practicing its missional convictions, it would have already been engaged in these relationships to a greater degree. This distinction would not so much have changed the strategy or outcome of my project but would bring clarity in how the results can be applied in other churches.

Going forward I hope to make more effort to be sure the congregation has opportunity to practice whatever I am preaching or teaching. This distinction between teaching and training is a commonsense approach to discipleship, but it is easily overlooked.

I also hope to develop the eight practices which form the context of evangelism in this project. I introduced these practices into the project as a means of measuring readiness for evangelism in the event that I saw no real increase in evangelism defined as the actual proclamation of the gospel. Since I did see the improvement I hoped for, I did not get much into the role of these other practices, which showed no real change throughout the project. With some minor changes, I think these practices could be developed as the framework for a comprehensive culture of evangelism. Now that I see my congregation engaging in evangelism, it could be useful to assess the congregation's overall culture of evangelism. Developing that culture would provide a way of thinking about the quality of evangelistic efforts or strategies and provide direction for persons who might tend to evangelize without substantive relationship.

Application for the Broader Church

This thesis-project offers some applicable insight for churches similar to Calvin Presbyterian Church who are struggling to engage in evangelism. Churches could begin by examining their convictions and missional posture. If the people of the congregation are not interested in serving or reaching the community, they are not likely to engage in healthy evangelism. If they do not already have a strong missional posture, they may begin to build a healthy missional approach that includes conviction and understanding of evangelism from the

beginning. If a church already has a healthy missional posture, or once they have developed one, they can look more narrowly at their congregation's convictions and understanding of evangelism as a potential source of the problem. As this project uncovered, it is important to define and communicate a clear definition of evangelism while equipping the congregation. Assuming these convictions and understandings are in order, the research and outcomes of this project indicate that such churches may increase engagement in evangelism by helping their people develop significant relationships with non-Christians or non-churchgoers.

The questionnaire developed for this project could easily be adapted to assess any congregation's engagement in evangelism. It could measure convictions about evangelism, actual engagement in evangelism, relationships in the community, and engagement with eight practices forming a context for evangelism. Taken together, with some adaptation, it could be used to assess a congregation's culture of evangelism.

Closing Remarks

Americans in general are lacking in relationships and are increasingly unreached by the Christian gospel. Even though the church has every theological reason in the missio Dei and commands of Christ her king to be engaging in relationships and evangelism, many are struggling with both. Forming significant relationships between the church and non-believers is a practical way to meet the physical needs of the world. At the same time, these relationships catalyze obedience in evangelism, which in the power of the Holy Spirit, can have an impact both in this world and beyond.

As Jesus travelled throughout Galilee it was recorded, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’"[18] Even as I call the church to greater obedience in evangelism and relationships, my trust is ultimately not in the methods or insights advocated in this thesis-project. I pray and trust that the Lord will send his laborers to reap the harvest in his time and according to his will.

[18] Matt 9:36-38.

APPENDIX A

MISSIONAL POSTURE ASSESSMENT

This questionnaire is designed to explore the connections between missional identity, relationships in the community, and engagement in or readiness to engage in evangelism. Part 1 was created by Dr. Ken Priddy, of the GO Center, to determine a congregation's missional posture. Part 2 is uniquely designed to measure to what level participants are engaged in or ready to engage in evangelism**.** The information you provide will be helpful for churches and Christians anywhere who desire to increase their obedience in the Lord's call to evangelism. This study is being conducted by Rev. Sean Brubaker of Calvin Presbyterian Church, toward completion of a Thesis-Project with Gordon-Conwell Seminary. Please be assured that all of your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

Part 1: Calvin Presbyterian Church's Missional Posture. This part of the questionnaire was created by Dr. Ken Priddy of the GO Center.

Circle your personal level of agreement with the following statements.

1. We have started to focus ministry on our own congregation now that we have reached a point of stability.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

2. We used to see significant conversion growth, but it's been a while since we've seen that.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

3. We were very connected to our community, but that connection seems to have faded.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

4. We seem to be having less and less of an impact in our community as the community has changed over time.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

5. We haven't hosted an outreach event in our community in a long time.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

6. We know that we should reach out to our community, but we also know that entails risk and I'm not sure we're ready for that.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

7. We know that we should reach out to our community, but we don't even know where to start.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

8. We are considering reaching out to our community but are concerned that not everyone will be on board and folks might get upset.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

9. We have actually considered reaching out but we can't agree on whom we should try to reach.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

10. We know that Scripture compels us to go but need outside help to walk us through the process step by step.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

11. We would be open to very gradual change if we didn't have to change anything about who we are or what we are doing.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

12. We don't think it's wise to spend so much time and energy reaching out to a group of people who probably wouldn't come anyway.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

13. We don't have enough energy to care for our own people to reach out to people who probably have even more needs.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

14. We aren't willing to risk the open conflict in our church that might result from getting really serious about reaching.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

15. We have limited resources that are already stretched too thin to afford outreach to the community.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

16. We know that Scripture calls us to leave the safety of our church and reach our community for Christ, but we need someone to tell us how to do this faithfully and well.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

17. We're really excited to see new converts from our community in our newcomer's classes.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

18. We make certain that our church structure serves our mission to reach the community.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

19. We build evaluation and assessment of fruitfulness into every aspect of our church's ministry life.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

20. We have a clear process for making mature disciples who make mature disciples.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

21. We are so much different from the people in our community that we really don't want them to be part of our church.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

22. We would only be willing to reach out to the folks most like us theologically and spiritually.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

23. We use the majority of our mission dollars to support foreign mission work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

24. We pray and preach the Gospel faithfully and trust God for the numerical increase.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

25. We separate from the culture around us to protect ourselves from worldly influence.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

26. We tried to invite some folks in but they didn't come so it's not worth the effort to continue to do that.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

27. We enjoy the songs we sing, the fellowship we have and the sermons we hear, but wonder why we are declining.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

28. We are weary of the possibility of another evangelistic training course or sermon series.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

29. We are no longer willing to take the risk of inviting others to church.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

30. We think a change in programming would cause more people to come to faith in Jesus.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

31. We tried a couple of service projects but no one came to church so we are a little hesitant to keep trying when we obviously don't know what we're doing wrong.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

32. We know we are surrounded by people who are living without the hope of the Gospel.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

33. We are seeking to know God's purpose for locating us where we are.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

34. We want to engage our community with the Good News of Jesus.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

35. We have been trying to reach people in our own strength and not depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

36. We actively identify and develop leaders to expand our church's ministry capacity.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

37. We mobilize our people to serve our community regularly and specifically.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

38. We use mission dollars in various ways, including local missions that deepen our reach and credibility in our community.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

39. We hire staff who see themselves as developers of people who will equip our congregations to engage with others through outreach and evangelism.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

40. We are sharing our faith now because we want to instead of because we have to.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

41. We seem to have focused, lately, on getting community people into our church rather than on getting our church folks into the community.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

42. We are doing well with plenty of people and money, but it seems like we've lost some zeal for reaching the community.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

43. We aren't taking risks for the Gospel like we used to.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

44. We've settled into being a very stable, comfortable church.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

45. We have committed the next season of our church's life to ministering to the needs and wants of our congregation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

46. We recognize that our commitment to preaching, teaching and worship has caused our numbers to decrease.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

47. We are not overly concerned about reaching our immediate community because we are more of a regional church.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

48. We might be more committed to reaching our community if we thought that the people who live around us had leadership potential.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

49. We might be more committed to reaching our community if we thought that the people who live around us had the capacity to support the church financially.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

50. We are not going to compromise for the sake of growth but a few like-minded families would be welcomed.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B

MISSIONAL POSTURE ASSESSSMENT RESULTS

Missional Postures Scoresheet:

Statements 1-5	Post-Missional
Statements 6-10	Pre-Missional
Statements 11-15	Non-Missional
Statements 16-20	Pro-Missional
Statements 21-25	Anti-Missional
Statements 26-30	Non-Missional
Statements 31-35	Pre-Missional
Statements 36-40	Pro-Missional
Statements 41-45	Post-Missional
Statements 46-50	Anti-Missional

Strongly Disagree	1 Point
Disagree	2 Points
Agree	3 Points
Strongly Agree	4 Points

Church: Calvin Presbyterian Church
615 Crescent Ave., Ellwood City, PA 16117
39 Responses

Presbytery: Alleghenies **Date:** 02/02/2021

Statements are scored 1-4 and then combined with matching posture statements to identify the strongest missional posture of a given church as well as the strength of secondary postures that might be present. Each missional posture can score a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 40. By repeating the survey periodically, progress in missional commitment can be tracked as interval metrics.

ANTI 21	ANTI 22	ANTI 23	ANTI 24	ANTI 25	ANTI 46	ANTI 47	ANTI 48	ANTI 49	ANTI 50
49	54	86	125	71	73	60	72	64	84
TOTAL	ANTI =			385					353

NON 11	NON 12	NON 13	NON 14	NON 15	NON 26	NON 27	NON 28	NON 29	NON 30
90	62	68	72	68	55	113	79	66	85
TOTAL	NON =			360					398

PRE 6	PRE 7	PRE 8	PRE 9	PRE 10	PRE 31	PRE 32	PRE 33	PRE 34	PRE 35
69	61	87	68	85	72	128	124	139	91
TOTAL	PRE =			370					554

PRO 16	PRO 17	PRO 18	PRO 19	PRO 20	PRO 36	PRO 37	PRO 38	PRO 39	PRO 40
97	133	127	111	108	116	112	129	114	127
TOTAL	PRO =			576					598

POST 1	POST 2	POST 3	POST 4	POST 5	POST 41	POST 42	POST 43	POST 44	POST 45
112	112	78	94	65	93	81	88	101	89
TOTAL	POST =			461					452

Anti-Missional Total	738	(18.9)
Non-Missional Total	758	(19.4)
Pre-Missional Total	924	(23.7)
Pro-Missional Total	1174	(30.1)
Post-Missional Total	913	(23.4)

Primary Missional Posture
Pro-Missional

Secondary Missional Posture(s)
Pre-Missional
Post-Missional

APPENDIX C

CALVIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNARE

This questionnaire is designed to explore the connections between relationships in the community and engagement in or readiness to engage in evangelism. The information you provide will be helpful for churches and Christians anywhere who desire to increase their obedience in the Lord's call to evangelism. This study is being conducted by Rev. Sean Brubaker of Calvin Presbyterian Church, toward completion of a Thesis-Project with Gordon-Conwell Seminary. Please be assured that all of your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

Please circle your level of agreement with the following statements.

1. I believe that God desires all believers to share their faith and invite others to faith in Jesus.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. Within the last 14 days, I have spoken about Jesus with someone in my family or church.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. Within the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way to bless or serve a non-church goer.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. If asked, I can summarize the main points of the gospel in less than 2-3 minutes.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. Within the last 14 days, I have prayed for someone by name, to be saved or come to faith in Jesus.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Within the last 30 days, I have asked a non-church goer about their beliefs.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. There are opportunities to serve with my church that can help me form relationships in my community.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. Within the last 30 days, I have had table fellowship with at least 1 non-church goer.
(table fellowship includes a sit-down meal, coffee, or snack)

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. If called upon, I would be willing to lead someone in a prayer to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. Within the last 2 months, I have participated in ministry opportunities through my church that can help me form relationships with non-churchgoers and or non-believers.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. Within the last 6 months, I have shared the content of the gospel with a non-churchgoer.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. Within the last 6 months, I have invited a non-churchgoer to take a step toward faith in Christ.
(*examples: to worship, to pray, read the Bible, fellowship w/believers…)*

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

13. I regularly pray for the Spirit to guide me and to use me in Jesus' ministry.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14. I regularly listen for or try to discern the Spirit's leading through my day and/or in my relationships.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15. In the last 30 days, l have gone out of my way at least once to make or strengthen a relational connection with a non-churchgoer, in hope of sharing the gospel with them in the future.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. In the last 6 months, I have a formed at least 1 positive relationship with a student.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

17. In the last 6 months, I have formed at least 1 positive relationship with a resident of Crescent Place or Dennis “Schill Manor”.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

18. Within the past year, I have served on Calvin Presbyterian Church’s Session, Board of Deacons, or Vision Team.

YES or NO

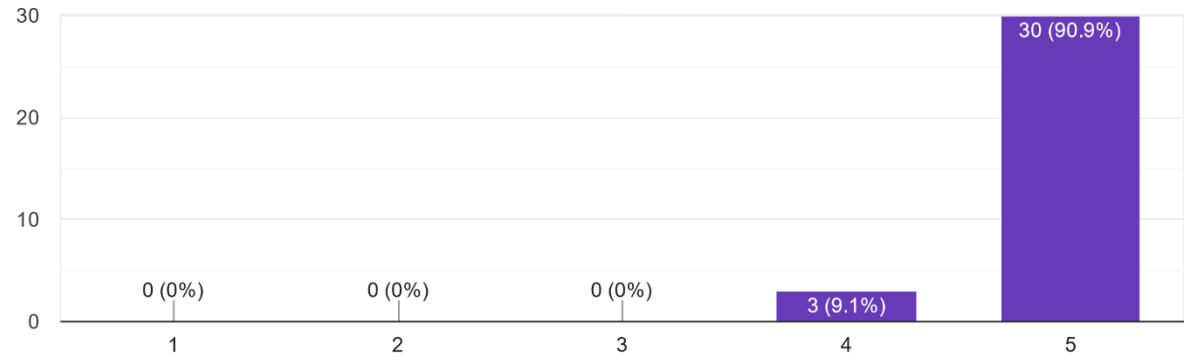
APPENDIX D

RESULTS OF ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE #1

Key: 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

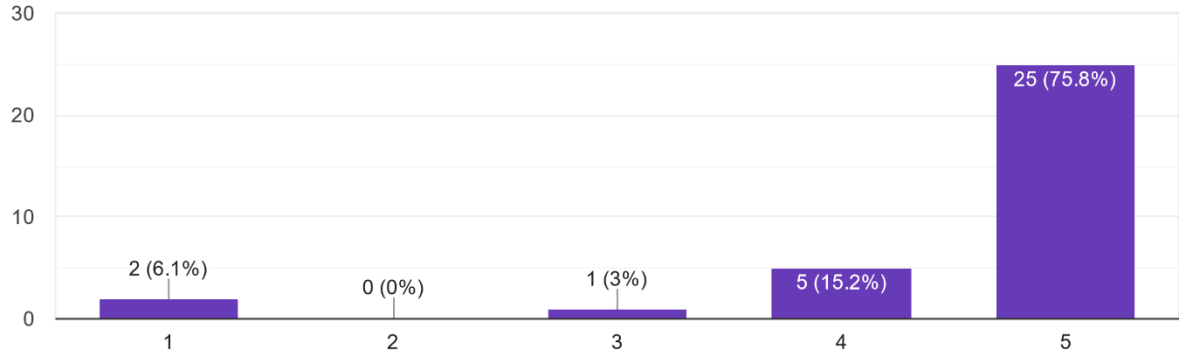
1- I believe that God desires all believers to share their faith and invite others to faith in Jesus.

33 responses



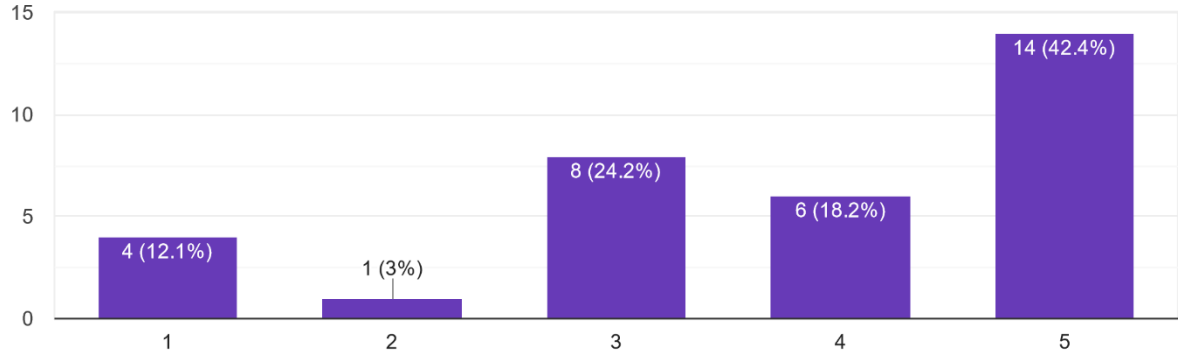
2- Within the last 14 days, I have spoken about Jesus with someone in my family or church.

33 responses



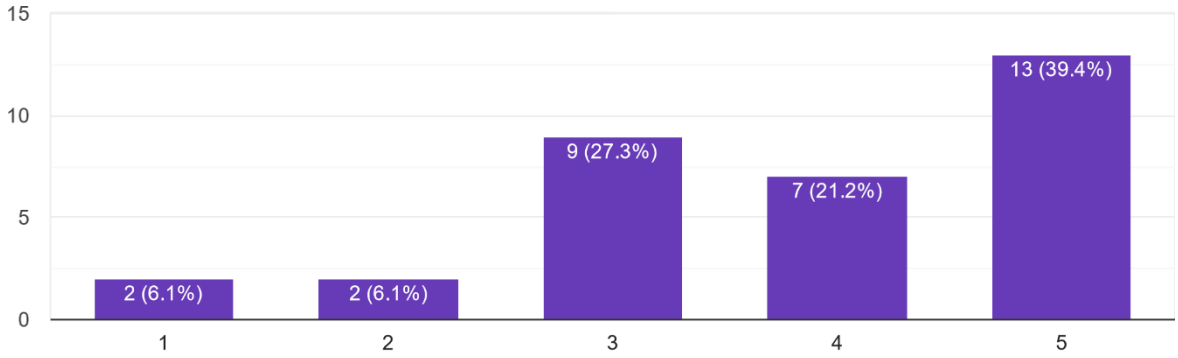
3- Within the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way to bless or serve a non-churchgoer.

33 responses



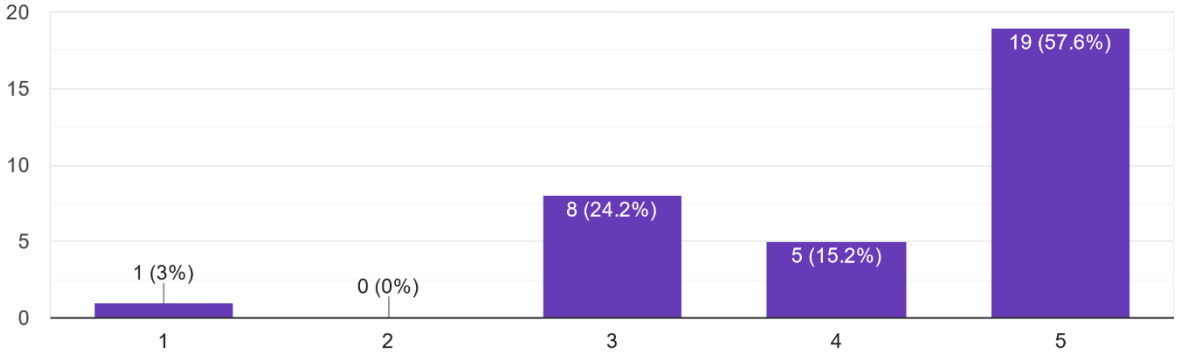
4- If asked, I can summarize the main points of the gospel in less than 2-3 minutes.

33 responses



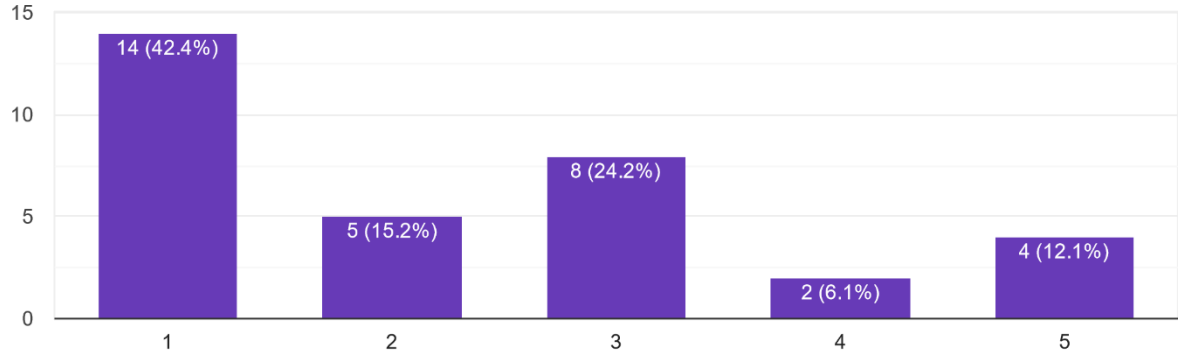
5- Within the last 14 days, I have prayed for someone by name, to be saved or come to faith in Jesus.

33 responses



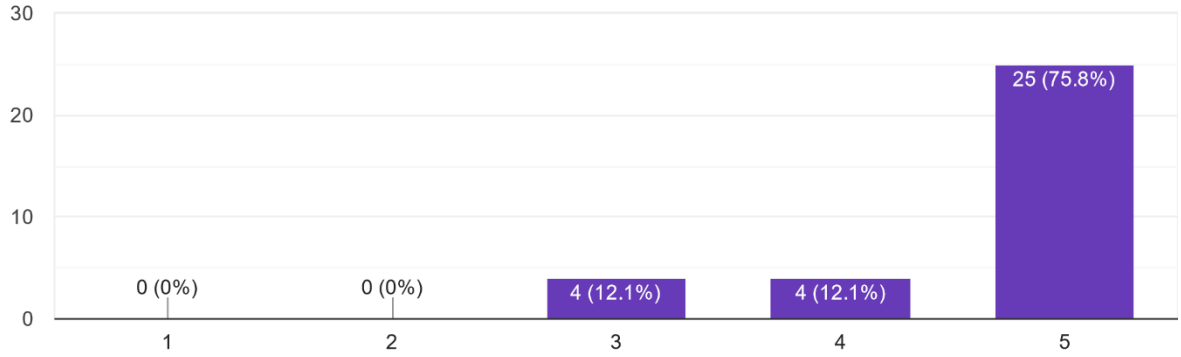
6- Within the last 30 days, I have asked a non-churchgoer about their beliefs.

33 responses



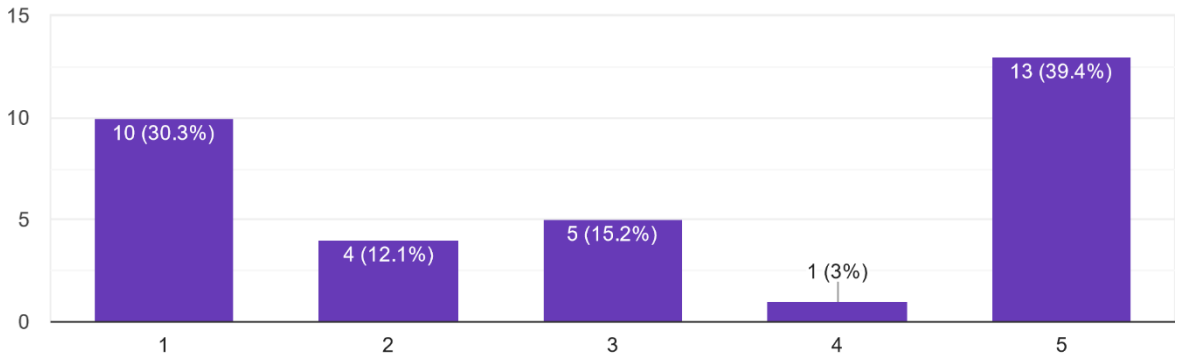
7- There are opportunities to serve with my church that can help me form relationships in my community.

33 responses



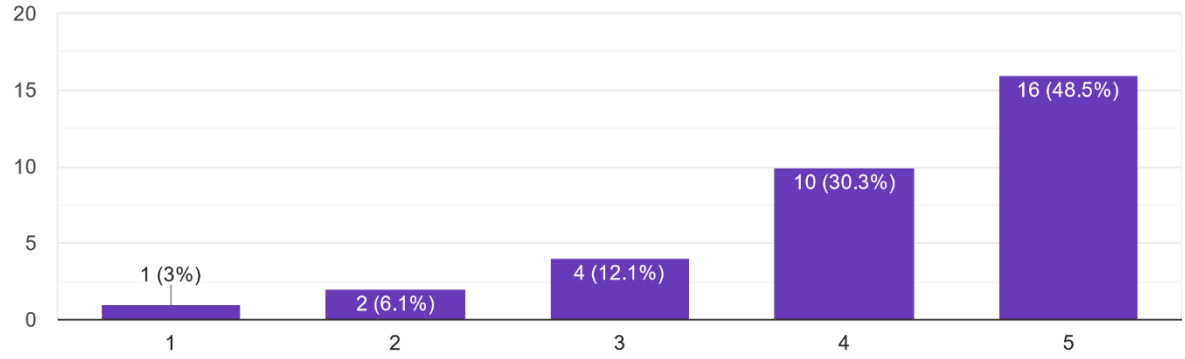
8- Within the last 30 days, I have had table fellowship with at least 1 non-churchgoer. (Table fellowship includes a sit-down meal, coffee, or snack.)

33 responses



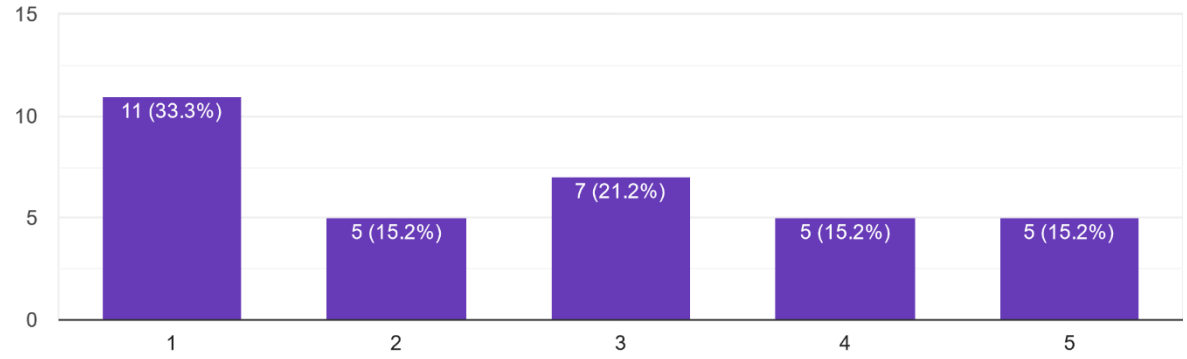
9- If called upon, I would be willing to lead someone in a prayer to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

33 responses



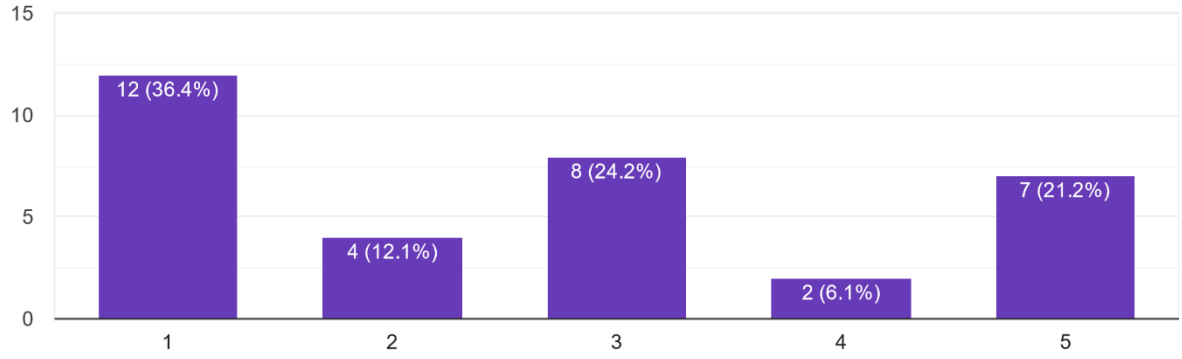
10- Within the last 2 months, I have participated in ministry opportunities through my church that can help me form relationships with non-churchgoers and or non-believers.

33 responses



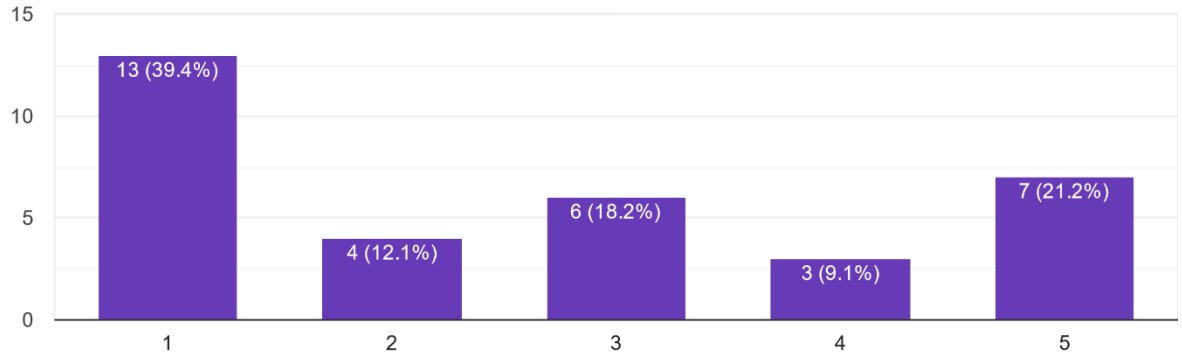
11- Within the last 6 months I have shared the content of the gospel with a non-churchgoer.

33 responses



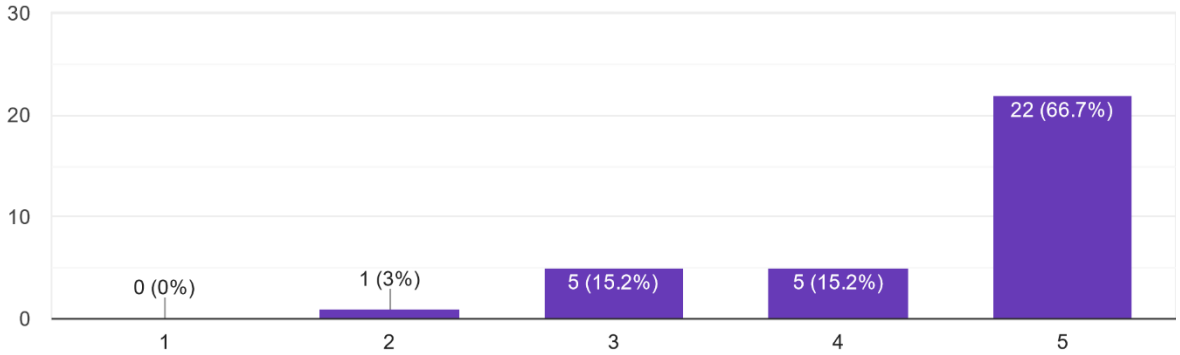
12- Within the last 6 months, I have invited a non-churchgoer to take a step toward faith in Christ. (Examples: to worship, pray, read the Bible, fellowship with believers...)

33 responses



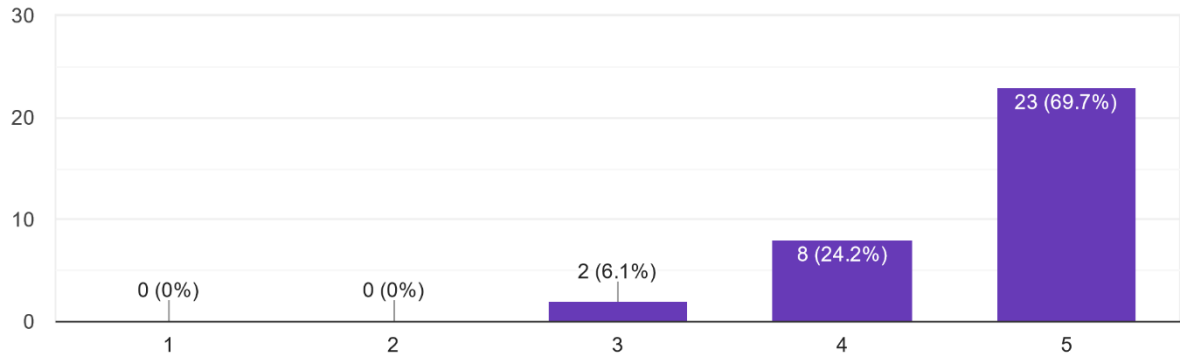
13- I regularly pray for the Spirit to guide me and to use me in Jesus' ministry.

33 responses



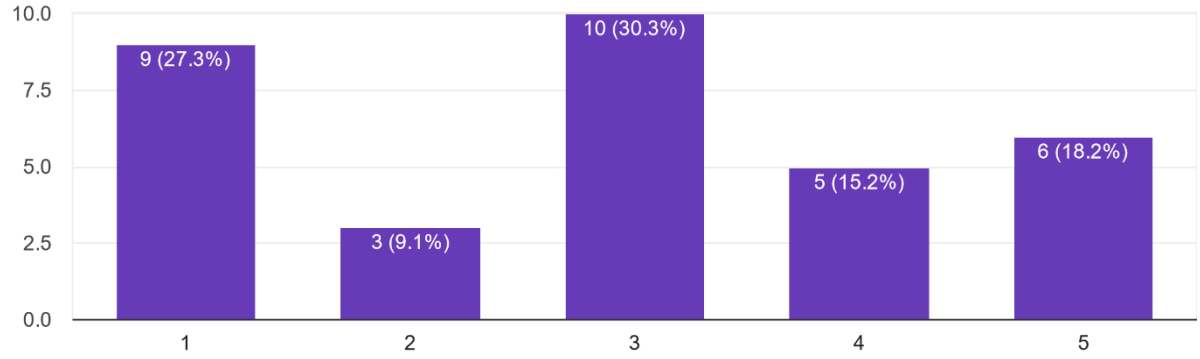
14- I regularly listen for or try to discern the Spirit's leading through my day and/or in my relationships.

33 responses



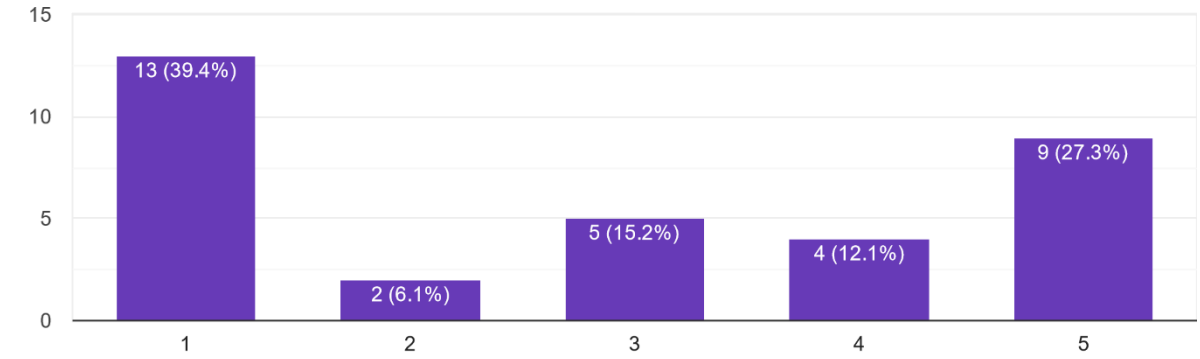
15- In the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way at least once to make or strengthen a relational connection with a non-churchgoer, in hope of sharing the gospel with them in the future.

33 responses



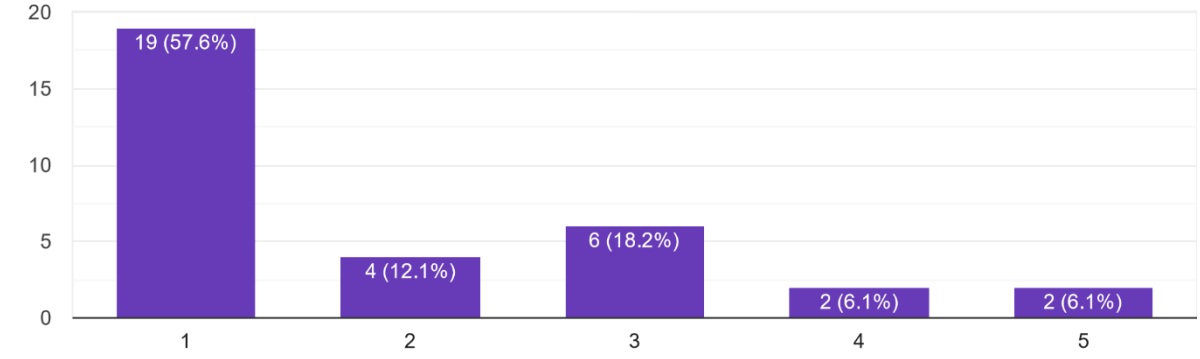
16- In the last 6 months, I have a formed at least 1 positive relationship with a student.

33 responses



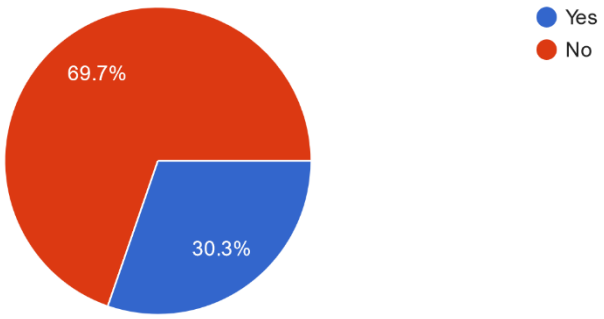
17- In the last 6 months, I have formed at least 1 positive relationship with a resident of Crescent Place or Dennis “Schill Manor”.

33 responses



18- Within the past 12 months, I have served on the Calvin Presbyterian Church Session, Board of Deacons, or Vision Team.

33 responses



APPENDIX E

SNACK & CHAT FLIER

APPENDIX F

SERMON SERIES: JOURNEYS OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 1:29-34 John the Baptist

Jesus, like the Father, reveals himself.

John 1:35-42 Andrew and Simon Peter

Seeking Jesus is a journey.

John 1:43-51 Philip and Nathaniel

As Jesus knew Nathaniel, Jesus already knows you.

John 3:1-21 Nicodemus

Some journeys are indirect.

John 4:1-42 Woman of Samaria

Jesus crosses barriers to offer living water to those who seem far off and so should we.

John 4:46-54 A Roman Official

There are at least three stages of belief: belief in the possibility, belief to take initial steps of trust, and belief as committed faith in Jesus.

John 6:22-71 A Crowd that Turned Away

As Jesus offends people by pointing to spiritual truth, we must also be willing to offend in pointing to the exclusivity of Jesus.

John 9:1-41 A Man Born Blind and the Pharisees

When Jesus reveals himself, he brings salvation to some and judgment to others.

John 11:20-46 Martha

In Jesus, we can journey through grief into life.

John 12:20-26 Greeks

As Jesus glorifies himself and furthers his mission through sacrifice, we must also sacrifice for the sake of furthering his mission.

John 12:37-43 Those Who Reject and Fail to Confess.

In the Father's sovereign will, many will reject Jesus, and some will choose to not to confess for fear of men.

John 14:1-31 Thomas, Phillip and Judas (not Iscariot).

Thomas, Philip and Judas were each invited to take further steps in their faith journeys and Jesus invites us to do the same.

John 20:11-18 Mary Magdalene

As Jesus pointed Mary Magdalene beyond even his temporary physical presence, we are to look beyond earthly suffering and blessings to the spiritual and heavenly things.

John 20:24-31 Thomas

All faith is tested and the Bible must be trusted in our journey of faith.

John 21:1-19 Peter

As Jesus took Jesus back to the basics of his call, his experience of grace, and commission to "feed the sheep," we must constantly refresh these basics in our own journeys of faith.

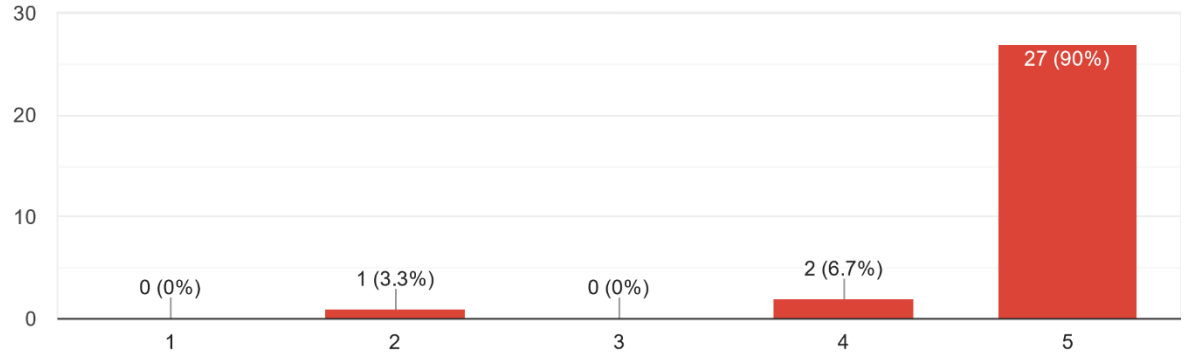
APPENDIX G

RESULTS OF ANONYMOUS QUESTIONAIRRE #2

Key: 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

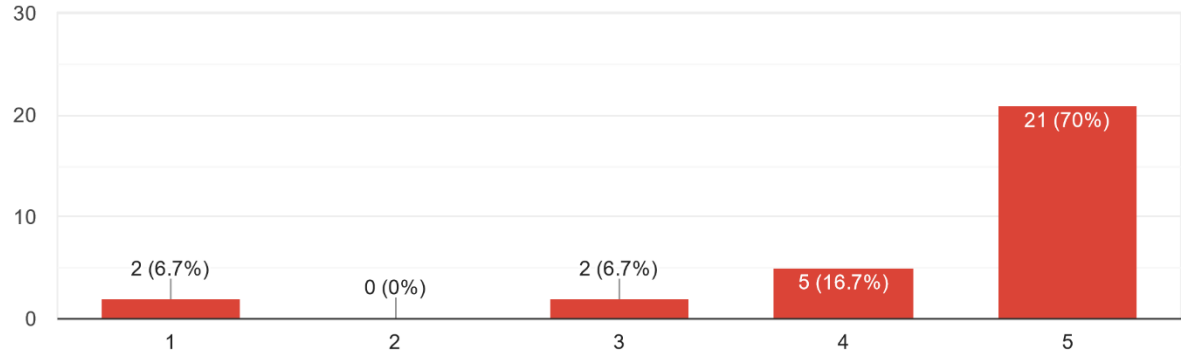
1- I believe that God desires all believers to share their faith and invite others to faith in Jesus.

30 responses



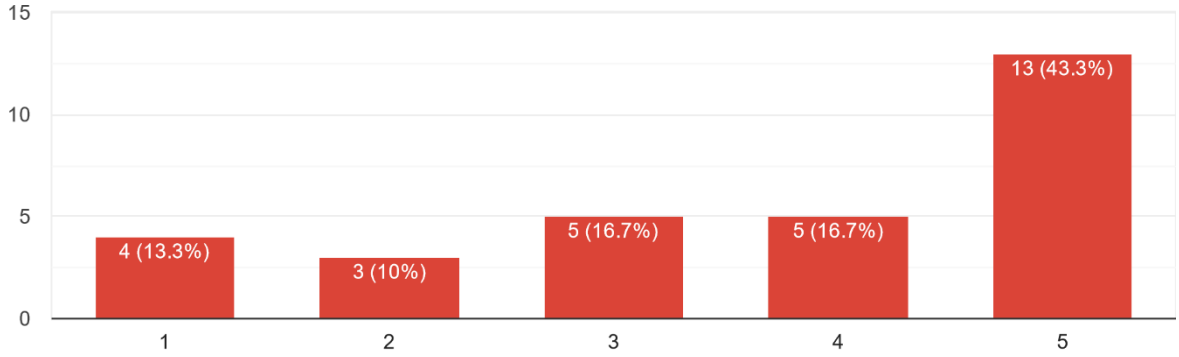
2- Within the last 14 days, I have spoken about Jesus with someone in my family or church.

30 responses



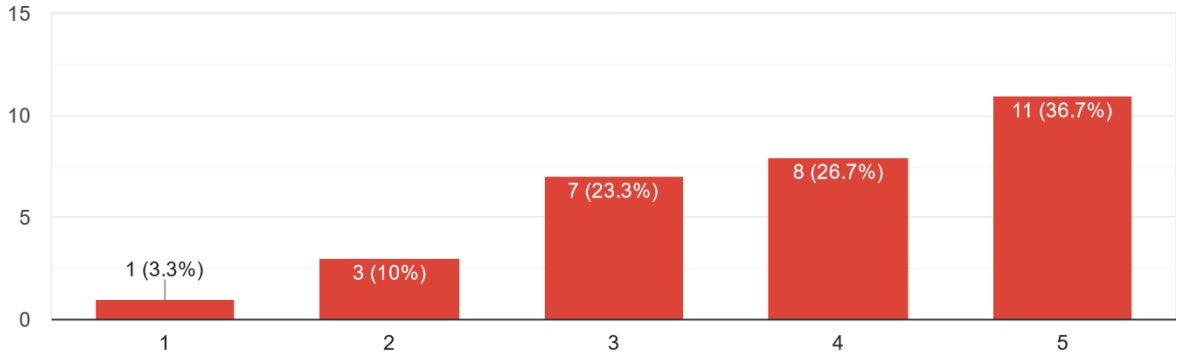
3- Within the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way to bless or serve a non-churchgoer.

30 responses



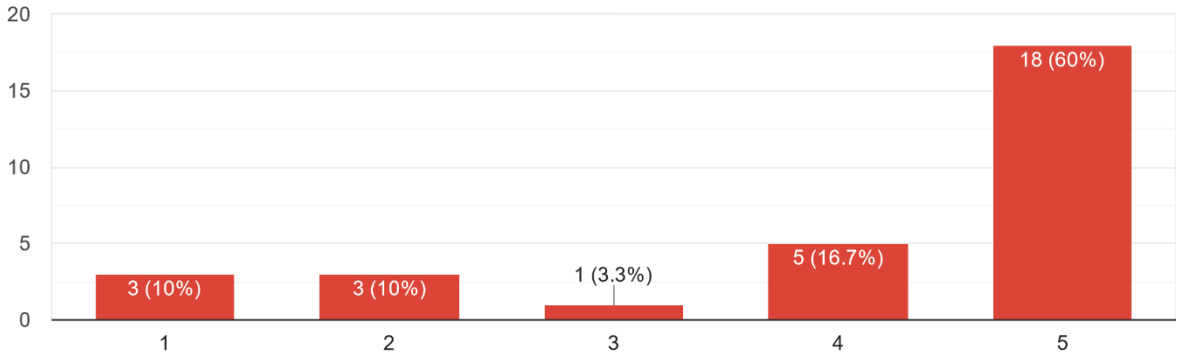
4- If asked, I can summarize the main points of the gospel in less than 2-3 minutes.

30 responses



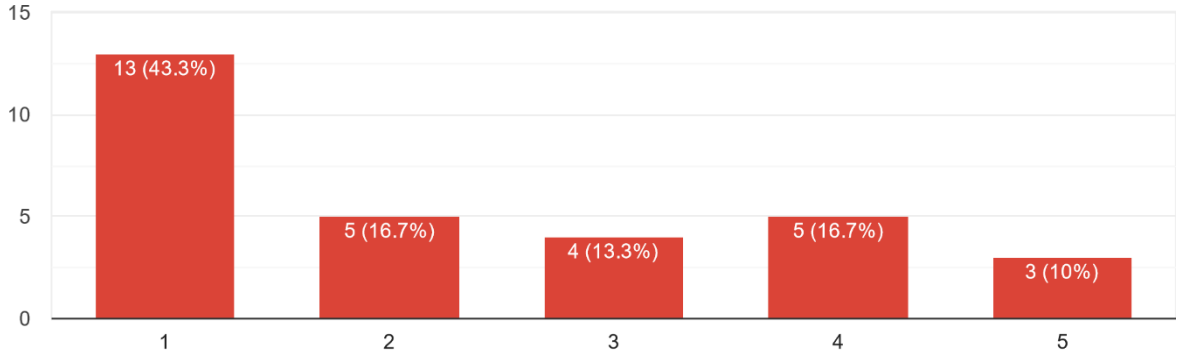
5- Within the last 14 days, I have prayed for someone by name, to be saved or come to faith in Jesus.

30 responses



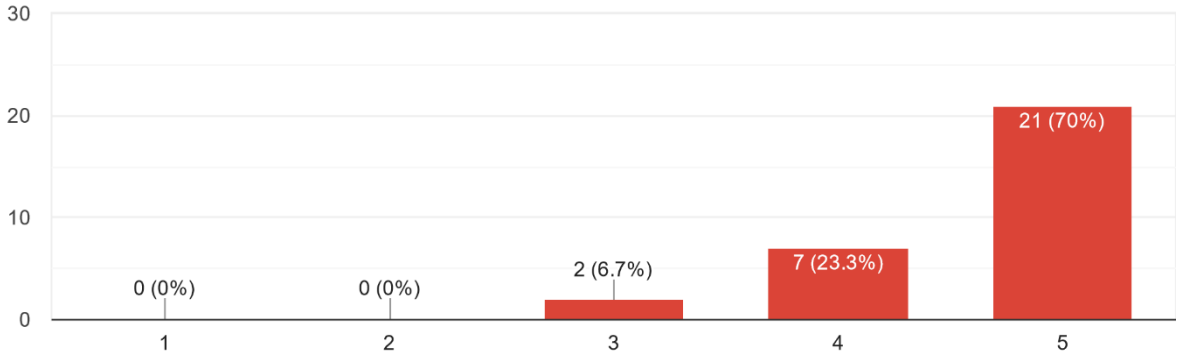
6- Within the last 30 days, I have asked a non-churchgoer about their beliefs.

30 responses



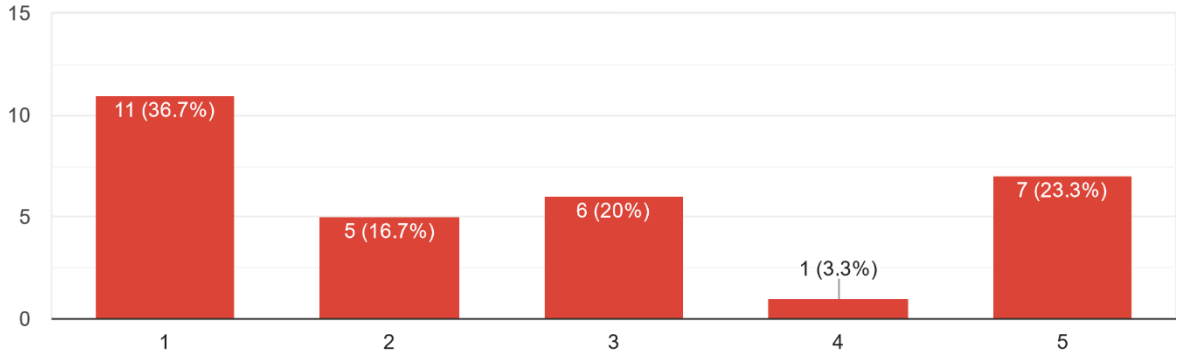
7- There are opportunities to serve with my church that can help me form relationships in my community.

30 responses



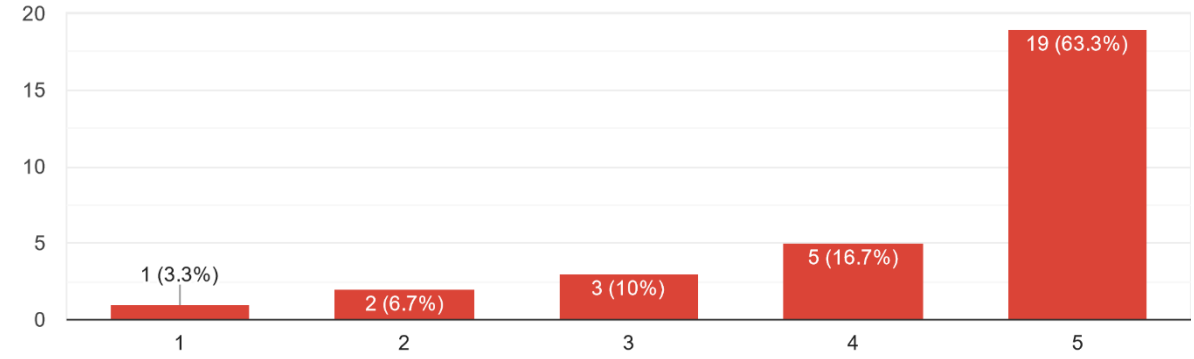
8- Within the last 30 days, I have had table fellowship with at least 1 non-churchgoer. (Table fellowship includes a sit-down meal, coffee, or snack.)

30 responses



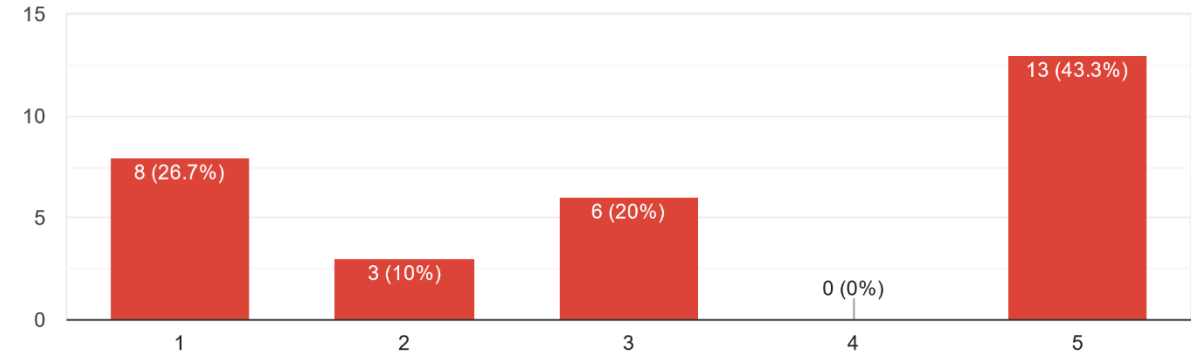
9- If called upon, I would be willing to lead someone in a prayer to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

30 responses



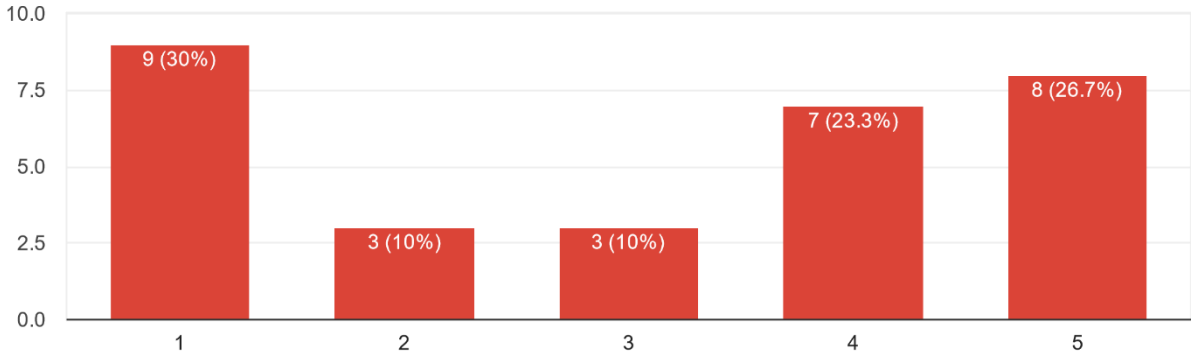
10- Within the last 2 months, I have participated in ministry opportunities through my church that can help me form relationships with non-churchgoers and or non-believers.

30 responses



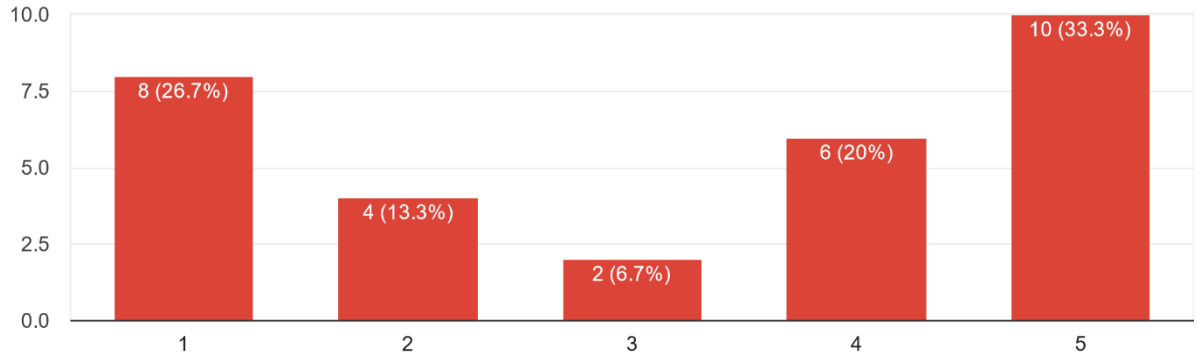
11- Within the last 6 months I have shared the content of the gospel with a non-churchgoer.

30 responses



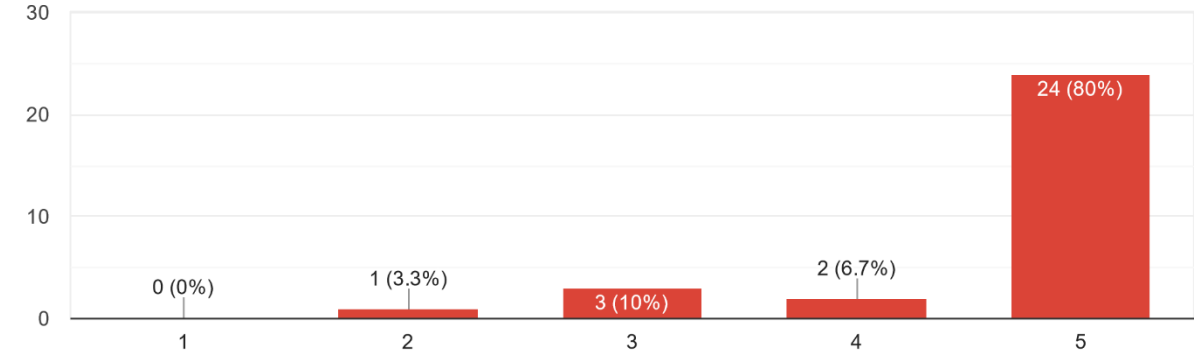
12- Within the last 6 months, I have invited a non-churchgoer to take a step toward faith in Christ. (Examples: to worship, pray, read the Bible, fellowship with believers...)

30 responses



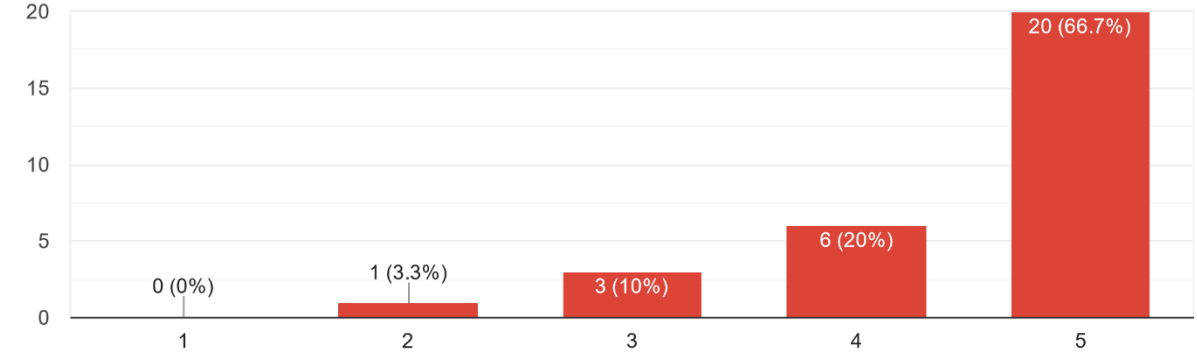
13- I regularly pray for the Spirit to guide me and to use me in Jesus' ministry.

30 responses



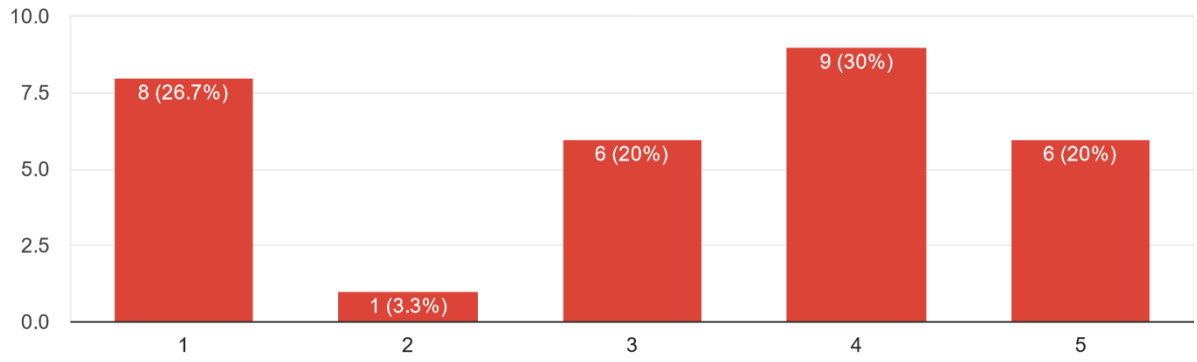
14- I regularly listen for or try to discern the Spirit's leading through my day and/or in my relationships.

30 responses



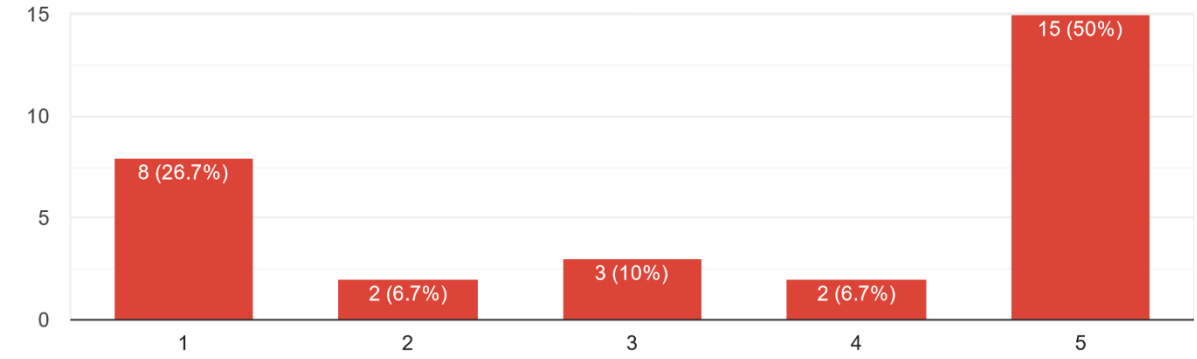
15- In the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way at least once to make or strengthen a relational connection with a non-churchgoer, in hope of sharing the gospel with them in the future.

30 responses



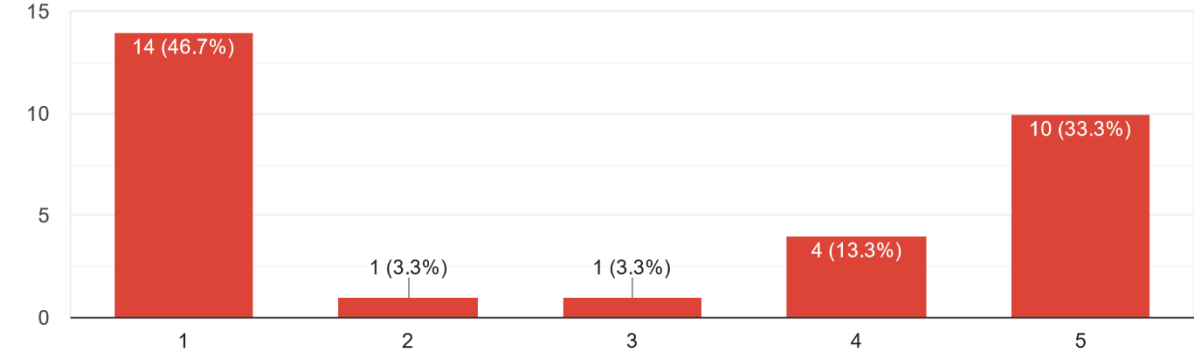
16- In the last 6 months, I have a formed at least 1 positive relationship with a student.

30 responses



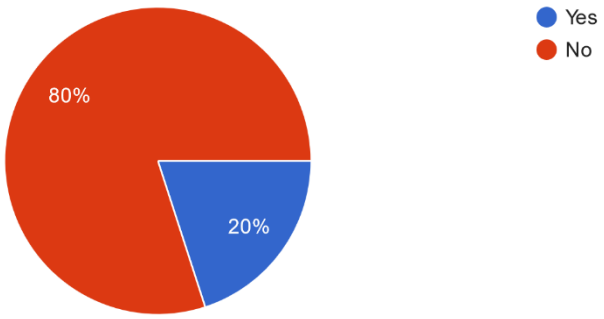
17- In the last 6 months, I have formed at least 1 positive relationship with a resident of Crescent Place or Dennis “Schill Manor”.

30 responses



18- Within the past 12 months, I have served on the Calvin Presbyterian Church Session or Board of Deacons.

30 responses



APPENDIX H

INDIVDUAL RESPONSES TO ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE #2

Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1- I believe that God desires all believers to share their faith and invite others to faith in Jesus.	2- Within the last 14 days, I have spoken about Jesus with someone in my family or church.	3- Within the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way to bless or serve a non-churchgoer.	4- If asked, I can summarize the main points of the gospel in less than 2-3 minutes.
Response #1	5	4	4	4
Response #2	5	5	2	5
Response #3	5	3	5	5
Response #4	5	5	5	5
Response #5	5	3	1	2
Response #6	5	5	5	5
Response #7	4	5	2	4
Response #8	5	5	5	5
Response $9	5	5	1	5
Response #10	5	5	5	5
Response #11	5	5	5	5
Response #12	5	5	5	5
Response #13	5	5	4	3
Response #14	5	4	3	2
Response #15	5	4	4	4
Response #16	5	4	2	3
Response #17	5	5	4	4
Response #18	5	5	1	5
Response #19	5	5	5	3
Response #20	5	5	5	4
Response #21	5	5	5	4
Response #22	5	5	5	2
Response #23	5	5	5	4
Response #24	5	5	4	4
Response #25	2	1	3	3
Response #26	5	5	5	5
Response #27	5	5	1	3
Response #28	5	5	3	3
Response #29	4	1	3	1
Response #30	5	4	3	3

	5- Within the last 14 days, I have prayed for someone by name, to be saved or come to faith in Jesus.	6- Within the last 30 days, I have asked a non-churchgoer about their beliefs.	7- There are opportunities to serve with my church that can help me form relationships in my community.	8- Within the last 30 days, I have had table fellowship with at least 1 non-churchgoer. (Table fellowship includes a sit-down meal, coffee, or snack.)
Response #1	5	1	5	3
Response #2	5	1	5	1
Response #3	3	3	4	3
Response #4	1	1	5	5
Response #5	2	1	3	1
Response #6	5	3	5	2
Response #7	5	2	4	1
Response #8	5	2	5	5
Response $9	5	1	5	1
Response #10	1	1	5	5
Response #11	5	1	5	1
Response #12	5	2	5	5
Response #13	4	1	5	2
Response #14	5	4	4	2
Response #15	4	4	5	3
Response #16	2	1	5	1
Response #17	5	4	5	5
Response #18	1	1	3	1
Response #19	4	3	5	3
Response #20	5	4	5	3
Response #21	4	2	5	4
Response #22	5	5	5	2
Response #23	5	5	5	1
Response #24	5	3	5	5
Response #25	4	4	4	1
Response #26	5	5	5	5
Response #27	5	1	5	1
Response #28	2	1	4	1
Response #29	5	1	4	3
Response #30	5	2	4	2

	9- If called upon, I would be willing to lead someone in a prayer to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.	10- Within the last 2 months, I have participated in ministry opportunities through my church that can help me form relationships with non-churchgoers and or non-believers.	11- Within the last 6 months I have shared the content of the gospel with a non-churchgoer.	12- Within the last 6 months, I have invited a non-churchgoer to take a step toward faith in Christ. (Examples: to worship, pray, read the Bible, fellowship with believers...).
Response #1	4	3	4	4
Response #2	4	1	1	1
Response #3	5	2	2	2
Response #4	5	5	1	1
Response #5	5	1	1	1
Response #6	2	5	3	2
Response #7	3	1	1	1
Response #8	5	5	4	5
Response $9	5	5	5	5
Response #10	5	3	1	5
Response #11	5	1	5	1
Response #12	5	5	4	4
Response #13	5	5	3	5
Response #14	3	1	4	4
Response #15	5	5	4	4
Response #16	2	1	1	1
Response #17	4	5	4	5
Response #18	5	3	1	4
Response #19	3	3	5	4
Response #20	5	3	4	5
Response #21	4	5	5	5
Response #22	5	5	5	2
Response #23	5	2	5	5
Response #24	5	5	5	5
Response #25	5	5	3	5
Response #26	5	5	5	3
Response #27	5	1	1	1
Response #28	5	1	1	1
Response #29	1	3	2	3
Response #30	4	2	2	2

	13- I regularly pray for the Spirit to guide me and to use me in Jesus' ministry.	14- I regularly listen for or try to discern the Spirit's leading through my day and/or in my relationships.	15- In the last 30 days, I have gone out of my way at least once to make or strengthen a relational connection with a non-churchgoer, in hope of sharing the gospel with them in the future.	16- In the last 6 months, I have a formed at least 1 positive relationship with a student.
Response #1	3	4	3	5
Response #2	5	5	1	4
Response #3	5	5	3	2
Response #4	5	5	1	1
Response #5	4	3	1	1
Response #6	5	5	1	5
Response #7	5	5	2	1
Response #8	5	5	5	5
Response $9	5	5	1	5
Response #10	5	5	5	5
Response #11	5	5	3	5
Response #12	5	5	4	5
Response #13	5	4	4	5
Response #14	5	5	4	4
Response #15	5	4	5	5
Response #16	2	2	1	1
Response #17	5	5	5	3
Response #18	3	4	1	1
Response #19	5	4	3	5
Response #20	5	4	4	5
Response #21	5	5	4	5
Response #22	5	5	5	2
Response #23	5	5	4	5
Response #24	5	5	3	3
Response #25	3	3	5	3
Response #26	5	5	4	5
Response #27	5	5	3	1
Response #28	5	5	1	5
Response #29	5	5	4	1
Response #30	4	3	4	1

	17- In the last 6 months, I have formed at least 1 positive relationship with a resident of Crescent Place or Dennis “Schill Manor”.	18- Within the past 12 months, I have served on the Calvin Presbyterian Church Session or Board of Deacons.
Response #1	1	No
Response #2	5	No
Response #3	2	No
Response #4	1	No
Response #5	1	No
Response #6	5	No
Response #7	1	Yes
Response #8	1	No
Response $9	5	No
Response #10	5	No
Response #11	1	No
Response #12	1	No
Response #13	4	Yes
Response #14	1	No
Response #15	4	Yes
Response #16	1	No
Response #17	5	No
Response #18	5	No
Response #19	1	No
Response #20	1	No
Response #21	3	Yes
Response #22	5	No
Response #23	5	No
Response #24	5	No
Response #25	4	Yes
Response #26	4	Yes
Response #27	1	No
Response #28	1	No
Response #29	1	No
Response #30	5	No

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